

ALFRED

April, 1988 \$2.00 U.S./\$2.50 Can.

HITCHCOCK's

MYSTERY

MAGAZINE

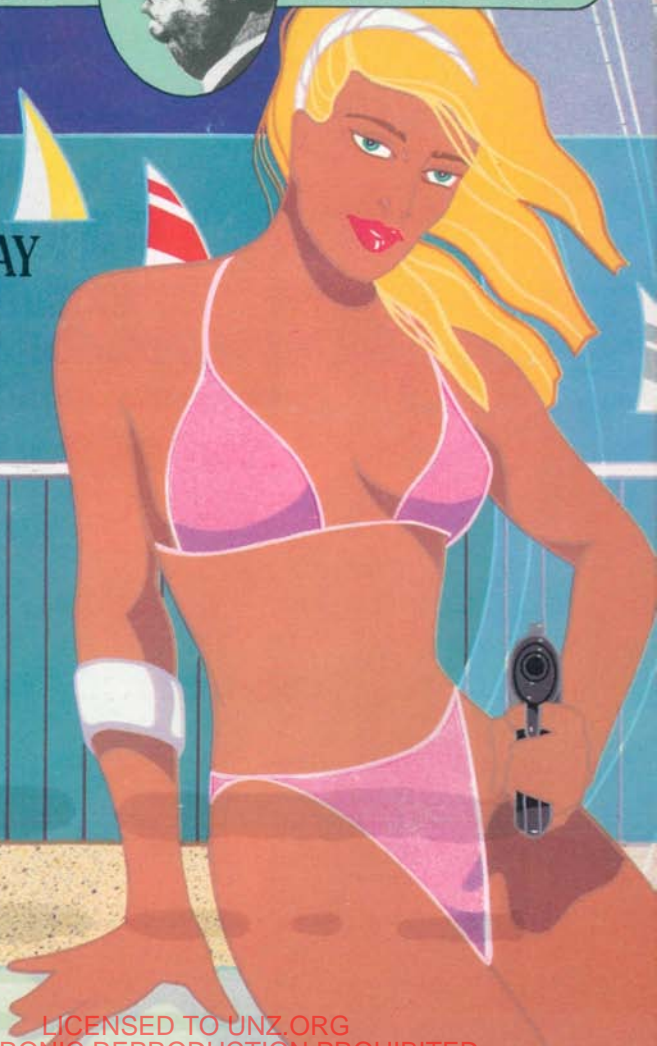


TILL TUESDAY

A John Francis
Cuddy Story

by Jeremiah
Healy

AND MORE
NEW STORIES
OF CRIME
AND SUSPENSE



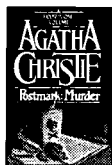
99920 0

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



**Crime buffs, thrill seekers,
gumshoe groupies & regular folks
belong to the Mystery Guild.**

It's your kind of place!



0091 Spec. ed.



3517 \$14.95



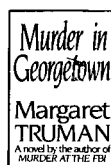
6114 \$14.95



* 9035 \$14.95



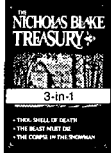
3509 \$16.95



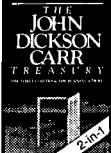
9316 \$16.95



9209 \$19.95



0117 Spec. ed.



0158 Spec. ed.



3319 \$16.95



9084 \$18.95



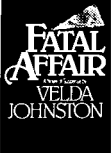
2519 \$10.95



9050 \$16.95



9639 \$16.95



2477 \$15.95



0414 \$15.95



7872 \$17.95



9548 \$17.95

How The Mystery Guild works: Get 6 exciting books for 99¢ (plus shipping and handling)

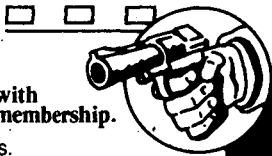
PLUS a free tote bag when accepted as a member. We reserve the right to reject any application. However, once accepted as a member, if you are not satisfied, return the books at Club expense within 10 days. Your membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

Big selection, big savings! About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), you'll get the Club bulletin describing the featured Selections and Alternates. Plus, up to 4 times a year, you may receive offers of special Selections—all at discounts off publishers' prices. To get the featured Selections, do nothing; they'll be shipped automatically. If you prefer an Alternate or no book at all, return the form provided with your preference by the date specified. That date allows you 10 days to decide. If you have less than 10 days and get an unwanted Selection, return it at Club expense and owe nothing. A shipping and handling charge is added to all shipments.

Easy purchase plan! You need buy only 4 books at regular low Club prices during your first year of membership; then continue to enjoy Club benefits without obligation or resign at any time. The Mystery Guild offers its own complete, hardbound editions, sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save you even more.

* Explicit scenes and/or language may be offensive to some.

Guild editions save you up to 60% off publishers' edition prices quoted above.



Take any 6 books for 99¢ with membership.

Values up to \$113.70 in Publishers' Editions.



★ 4499 \$17.95



3004 \$15.95



0265 \$17.95



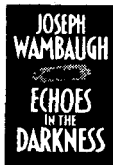
3947 \$15.95



4598 \$15.95



4572 \$12.95



★ 7898 \$18.95



8490 Spec. ed.



8771 \$15.95



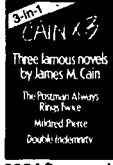
★ 2816 \$12.95



★ 8474 \$18.95



★ 9225 \$17.95



3954 Spec. ed.



8458 \$18.95



0042 Spec. ed.



9407 \$15.95



9019 \$15.95



9068 \$14.95

★ Explicit scenes and/or language may be offensive to some.

FREE
TOTE
with membership



MYSTERY
GUILD

Garden City, NY 11535

Please accept my application for membership in The Mystery Guild and send me the 6 books indicated below plus my FREE tote bag. Bill me 99¢ plus shipping and handling. I understand that I need buy only 4 books at regular low Club prices during the first year of my membership to complete my commitment. My membership will be subject to the terms and conditions presented in this ad.

No-risk guarantee: If not delighted after examining my 6 selections, I may return the books within 10 days at Club expense. My membership will be cancelled and I will owe nothing. I may keep the FREE tote bag in any case.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

CT-928

Mr. _____
Ms. _____

(Please print)

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If under 18, parent must sign. _____

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only.
Offer slightly different in Canada.

35-MG60

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS



SHORT STORIES

TILL TUESDAY by Jeremiah Healy	10
THE PULPBOOK DETECTIVE'S WIFE by Dana M. Anderson	22
THE NOTE by Judith O'Neill	34
SHATTERPROOF by Jim Fusilli	41
AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER by Stephen Wasylyk	56
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DAPHNE by Gregor Robinson	74
HOW TO MURDER YOUR SPOUSE by David Pierce	84
GUILT TRIP by Jeffrey Bush	94
NOT QUITE DEAD by Arthur Leslie	98

MYSTERY CLASSIC

THE LEARNED ADVENTURE OF THE DRAGON'S HEAD by Dorothy L. Sayers	118
--	------------

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S NOTES	4
THE MYSTERIOUS PHOTOGRAPH	55
UNSOLVED by Susan Zivich	73
SOLUTION TO THE MARCH "UNSOLVED"	83
BOOKED & PRINTED by Mary Cannon	148
MURDER BY DIRECTION by Peter Shaw	152
THE STORY THAT WON	155

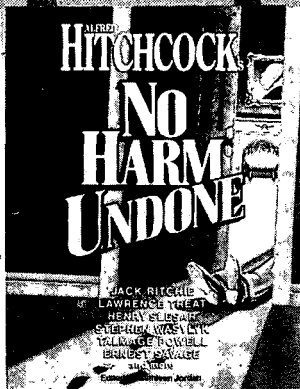
ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE Vol. 33, No. 4, April, 1988. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., \$2.00 per copy in the U.S.A. \$2.50 in Canada. Annual subscription \$19.50 in the U.S.A. and possessions; \$23.00 elsewhere payable in advance in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1932, Marion, O. 43305. Call (614)383-3141 with questions regarding your subscription. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing office, Canadian 3rd class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. © 1988 by Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. The stories in this magazine are all fictitious, and any resemblance of the characters in them to actual persons is completely coincidental. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention. Reproduction or use without express permission of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. All submissions must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. POSTMASTER: Send Form 3579 to Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 1932, Marion, Ohio 43305. In Canada return to 628 Monmouth Rd., Windsor, Ontario, N8Y3L1. **ISSN: 0002-5224.**

Cover by Cameron Wasson

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNCOVER NEW WORLDS

With These New Anthologies from Longmeadow Press



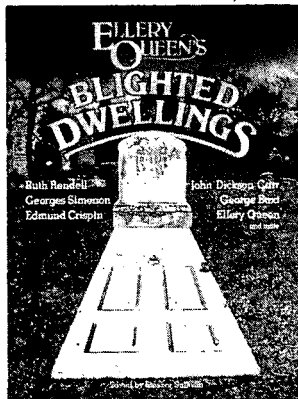
Alfred Hitchcock's world of mystery and suspense

Alfred Hitchcock's No Harm Undone

Edited by Cathleen Jordan

The master of suspense opens his files to compile 24 stories of mystery and intrigue, from some of today's most outstanding suspense authors: Lawrence Treat, Talmage Powell, Jack Ritchie, Henry Slesar and many others.

\$7.95/#7533



Ellery Queen's world of ghostly beings

Ellery Queen's Blighted Dwellings

Edited by Eleanor Sullivan

Renowned writers such as Ruth Rendell, Honore de Balzac, Lilly Carlson and others invite mystery fans to enter homes inhabited by the spectres of the mind, in this collection of 23 ghostly tales.

\$7.95/#7536

Pick them up today at your nearby Waldenbooks store. And while you're there, check out the Waldenbooks Mystery Club, a captivating book club with free membership a monthly newsletter and special savings for mystery and intrigue fans. Sign up today!

America finds it at
Waldenbooks®

Books • Audio • Video • Magazines • Book Clubs • Special Orders
Over 975 stores nationwide.

To order call toll-free 1-800-543-1300, Operator #390

(Alaska and Hawaii call 1-800-545-1000, Operator #390)

SK271

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR'S NOTES

by Cathleen Jordan

In our Mid-December issue, as we hope most of you remember, we recounted a bizarre tale of thievery at some friends' weekend house in a wooded, isolated area in New York State. A number of readers responded with solutions, or perhaps "solutions," to the crime. We enjoyed all of them; a selection follows...

Your friends' misfortune is indeed regrettable, but the event certainly has all the ingredients for a rollicking good mystery. The solution may be elementary, when you consider...

THE CASE OF THE CLEANLY KLEPTO

We can make some initial deductions as to who the culprits were not.

Local thieves? Highly unlikely. Even though they might have been aware of your friends' weekend comings and goings, they would have repeated their restocking excursions in the area and local authorities would have been aware of such happenings.

Vagabond children? *Certainly not.* While the briefs and the nature of the thievery suggest youngsters, I've never seen an unsupervised child yet who would shower willingly, do the laundry, clean up messes, and neatly replace disturbed furnishings while remaining undisciplined enough to smoke and drink. The boot size and the theft of the cleaning supplies suggest the presence of at least one adult.

Unscrupulous campers (or the like) stocking up? Well, maybe. But the considerable amount of time the visitors spent at the cottage (showering, eating, drinking, and doing laundry), the relative care extended, and the consumable nature of most of the items pilfered suggest something else.

What we have here is a practical demonstration of one of Murphy's Laws. It reads, "If you're in the right pew, chances are it's the wrong church."

Consider the following scenario.

Like many who have weekend cabins or cottages they don't make full use of, an owner (we'll call him "John") decides to supplement his income by

FINANCIAL ADVICE NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD.

Even the best advice can sometimes be confusing. But with Sylvia Porter's Personal Finance Videos, powerful, moneymaking concepts come alive, forming simple, clear pictures in your mind.

In 7 WINNING INVESTMENT STRATEGIES, you see charts, graphs, and practical, everyday examples that show how you can profit from:

- home ownership
- real estate
- tax-advantaged investments
- when to buy or sell stocks
- higher income investments
- investing for growth and appreciation
- mutual funds

You'll discover sensible investments geared to your lifestyle, your family commitments, and your personal finance objectives. What's more, you'll see absolutely what *not* to do with your money.

So don't let another day pass. Use 7 WINNING INVESTMENT STRATEGIES to brighten your financial outlook.

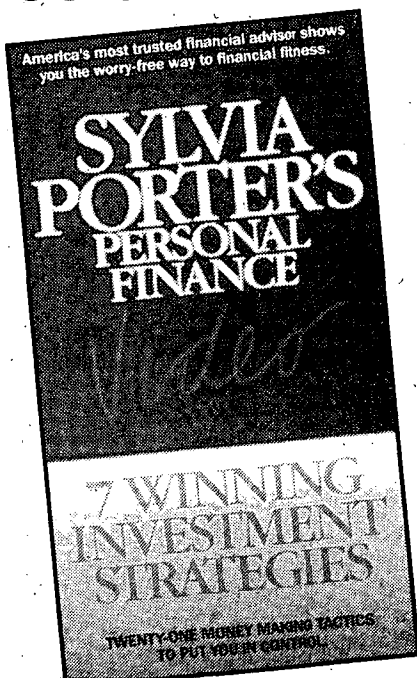
ONLY \$29⁹⁵



CALL TOLL-FREE TODAY
1 (800) 453-9700

Or use coupon

© 1988 J2 Communications



Make check/money order payable to J2 COMMUNICATIONS and send to:	
SYLVIA PORTER VIDEO • P.O. Box 3169 • Ogden, UT 84409	
Yes! Please send me _____ SYLVIA PORTER'S PERSONAL FINANCE VIDEO(s) for \$29.95 each (plus \$3.00 shipping/handling per tape).	
<input type="checkbox"/> VHS <input type="checkbox"/> Beta	
Method of Payment: <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> Check/Money Order	
CREDIT CARD #	_____
EXP: _____	SIGNATURE _____
Name _____ (Please Print)	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____

renting it during weekdays. His ad would read as many do:

Mountain retreat for rent—weekdays. Fully equipped and stocked. Call or write John at . . .

A family (the "Smiths" will do for a name) inquire, and upon payment the owner writes or calls, informing them of the availability, giving them directions, and telling them where to find the key. John also reminds them to try to leave the place as organized and clean as they originally find it.

Murphy now takes over and the Smiths unknowingly make a wrong turn or two and mistakenly end up at your friends' cottage, certain they have arrived at the right place. They look for the key at the purported spot and find it by coincidence or search nearby until they do locate it (convinced that John suffers from bad recall).

The plot thickens when we discover that one or more Smiths suffer from the dreaded "hotel/motel scrounger syndrome." This common affliction strikes many overnight hotel or motel guests and is characterized by a propensity of the temporary occupants to perform petty larceny.

Normally, the disease's victims take those ridiculously tiny bars of soap, a few of the sandpaper-like towels, all the writing paper, envelopes, and

postcards bearing the establishment's letterhead or picture, the coffee, cream, and sugar samples (with the cup holders), the plastic water glasses, and occasionally a few light bulbs and the Gideon Bible.

In the case of the mountain cottage rental, the Smiths *paid* for the consumables, didn't they? *Of course!* So they take them, huh?

At this point, the scenario is nearly complete. The Smiths get ready to leave, so they clean up their messes (forgetting the empty muffin box), return the dust cloths, and straighten up as requested. Then, due to inadvertent packing or to change the status of their larceny from "petty" to "minor grand," they take the running clothes and boots. The beer cans in the yard are missed and forgotten due to the darkness on the night they leave or are simply ignored because they are too lazy to pick them up. Perhaps they rationalized that their agreement to clean the cottage didn't include the front lawn.

John must have been pleased to find renters who not only returned everything to its exact place but who didn't use any of the supplies in his cottage.

So that's the theory. The fact is, most people are relatively honest and *all* people make mistakes. To imagine anyone bringing a young boy along on

a leisurely and tidy pilfering binge at an isolated retreat and staying around to shower and do laundry is hardly a profitable or logical procedure for any type of burglar.

So what to do?

A little detective work could identify the mystery cottage's owner and thereby the inadvertent burglars—should your friends decide to pursue the matter.

They might check with local authorities and businesses to determine who rents out cottages in the area. Certainly area and New York newspapers (often available at libraries or at the publisher's offices) for July and August of 1986 should be searched for rentals near their cottage. It should be noted that the period between Independence Day and Labor Day is a prime vacation period, particularly for mountain retreat rentals.

They could study a map of the area and try to visualize the error which might have sent the Smiths to their cottage. A subsequent drive might locate the house the Smiths *should* have been occupying.

For the near future, your friends should consider hanging a sign on their cottage which reads: "No, this ain't it. You're lost."

James A. Noble
Patuxent River, Maryland

BLUE GOLDBLOCKS or GOLDBLOCKS FROM THE PLANET PLUTO

Your ordinary Plutonian is sea blue, hefty, with large head and girth, has appendages similar to our arms and legs, and wears a size ten medium shoe or boot.

It is nervous by nature and requires a high energy intake. It consumes large amounts of carbohydrates found in pasta, sweet rolls, canned goods, and frozen food, and also eats or drinks bacon fat, cigarette butts, dirt, cheap wine, and beer. But no glass. Broken glass must be removed from its premises.

It likes cool coffee in great amounts so pours about four flat-type cups at a time to chill quicker.

Though it consumes much food, it has a fixation on reducing. It wears plastic garbage bags, cut apart with a razor blade, under its running clothes. Aside from this, it perspires a lot naturally, so much laundering needs to be done. And to it, soap is soap, and many baths need to be taken, especially when deodorants are not available.

On Earth it picked up a pollen allergy and needs Kleenex or other absorbent paper constantly at its side. Smoking cig-

arettes helps a little to curb its allergy and soothe its nerves. It wears a tight head warmer, with holes for its protruding eyes, that would resemble a pair of boy's briefs, size 12.

It has eighty-eight large white teeth, which are a lot of teeth to brush. The bristles of a toothbrush soon become soft with extended use, so it requires about four brushes to do a proper job.

It is always quietly busy and has a sometimes very annoying nervous habit of removing residue from table tops, counters, and even the floor with its very large, round tongue—letting everything appear clean.

It has its own tiny TV receiver it attaches to its head; the receiver uses "D" batteries. It dislikes sound, and is not photographable, which is semi-explained later.

It likes being alone to do its own thing. Sometimes, when I try to talk to the one that moved into my basement apartment about something as mundane as the weather, it just dismisses me, muttering that the weather is never cold enough here.

Whenever it wants it can vanish, and maybe reappear on the other side of a wall—or on the other side of the country, I guess. At any rate, I need not furnish it with a key.

When it moved in, it stated it was from the planet Pluto,

which is part of "our" solar system so it was "family" on a visit.

Sometimes we go months without talking, but last year it was gone for a couple of days during the heat of August, and as it scoured its front claws with an SOS pad, it mentioned it had visited some mountain in New York State where it was cooler.

(I have to clean the lint from the dryer myself.)

But I am single, it is single, in a way it is "family."

Len Mot

Kansas City, Missouri

P.S. Its size is imposing and I have never had the courage to ask about its sex, or even its name, but I refer to it as "Gurg." This is short for gurgles and the manner in which it laughs when it is watching the *Pluto Comedy Hour*.

No, I don't know who ransacked that cottage in the country, but it may have been the same gang who got into our cabin on the lake in Texas by prying open a flimsy door. They took four huge sirloin steaks out of the freezer, enough meat to feed twelve people. They left all the other frozen items. They took an entire case of beer except for the one can that fell out and rolled under a bed in the

(continued on page 139)

ELLERY
QUEEN THE WORLD'S LEADING
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

invites you to...

Rendezvous With Murder



on a unique mystery tour to England, the scene of so many classic mysteries. You'll visit the Old Bailey, attend private receptions with representatives from Scotland Yard and meet prominent English mystery writers.

As an extra-special feature, you'll participate in a "Murder Weekend" at a magnificent estate where you'll spend the weekend with a "killer." Here among the guests and staff will be a few less-than-genuine characters who will unveil a murder

scenario throughout the weekend. There will be plenty of clues (and a few red herrings) for you to follow. If you can figure out whodunit, an exciting prize awaits you!

But here's a chilling note: Each tour is limited to a very small number of amateur sleuths, so we recommend you reserve your place in the plot early. Don't miss this opportunity to play detective! Chills and thrills are guaranteed!

For FREE BROCHURE Call 1-800-428-7462. In California, 1-800-457-9515.

Or Mail To:

ICTS / InterContinental Travel

4133 Taylor St., Dept. DVP
San Diego, CA 92110

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FICTION

Till Tuesday



by Jeremiah Healy

Cambridge, Massachusetts, is home to Harvard University; boutique restaurants, and people who believe that Anthony Lewis editorials really make a difference. The two men sitting across from me lived there, but I pictured them more as *Wall Street Journal* than *New York Times*.

The one on the right was an architect, Michael Atlee. Atlee was lanky and angular; his brown hair showed licks of white at the temples. He fit poorly into an expensive blue tweed sports jacket and red rooster tie over slacks a little too pale to contrast correctly with his coat. Atlee held a pipe by its bowl in his hand, but made no effort to light it.

The man next to him spelled and smelled lawyer through and through. Thayer Lane, Esq., was on his business card, followed by his firm's four named partners and an upscale address. Slim, with black hair, Lane wore a charcoal pin-striped uniform of power and a muted paisley tie.

I guessed both men to be perched on the far side of forty-five. Neither seemed especially comfortable having a conference on the Wednesday after Labor Day in a one room office with JOHN FRANCIS CUDDY, CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIONS on the door.

After the introductions, Lane said, "Mr. Cuddy, we are here on a matter which cannot be discussed with the police. You come highly recommended, especially in the categories of loyalty and discretion."

"Thank you."

"I should say that while Mr. Atlee will be your client in this regard, he is uncomfortable with speaking at length. Hence, he asked me to accompany him here today."

I looked at Atlee. "What seems to be the problem?"

Atlee said, "Thayer?"

Lane took his cue. "Mr. Atlee—Michael—is a designer of buildings. Perhaps you're familiar with some of his works?"

Lane ticked off five recent commercial towers. I recognized two of them. I thought they looked like I-beams wearing Tina Turner dresses, but I kept it to myself. "Is the difficulty related to one of the buildings?"

"No, Mr. Cuddy," said Lane. "Let me try to outline the situation for you."

"Go ahead. And please call me John."

"John." Lane spoke as if he might otherwise forget the name. "John, are you married?"

"Widower."

"Ah, sorry. Well..." Lane took a deep breath. "Michael is married. However, he has been

engaged in an affair for three years with a woman, Gina Fiore. Michael believes that Ms.—Gina, has disappeared, and he would like you to find her.”

I looked over to Atlee, who sucked on his unlit pipe and blew imaginary smoke at me. His facial movements masked any emotion.

“How long has she been missing?”

“That’s uncertain. Michael last saw her this past Thursday but couldn’t reach her yesterday.”

Atlee said, “Tell him all of it.”

Lane glanced at Atlee and sighed. “Every Labor Day Michael hosts a family retreat at his summer home on Parker Pond in Maine. We all go up on Thursday night, scour and spruce the place up with paint and so forth against the elements, then relax and shoot skeet Sunday and Monday.”

“You shoot skeet on a lake on Labor Day weekend?”

Atlee said, “I’ve got ten acres. It’s private enough.”

I said to Atlee, “So she could be gone for as long as six days.”

“Right.”

“Or as little as twenty hours.”

Lane stuck in, “My point precisely.”

Atlee said, “Doesn’t matter. She’s gone.”

“Where does Gina live?”

Atlee nodded to Lane, who

took over again. “Gina lives in a condominium on Revere Beach that Michael purchased as an investment. Part of their, ah, arrangement is that she is to be available at all times. By telephone and in person.”

Lovely. I said to Lane, “A few minutes ago you said ‘we’?”

“I’m sorry?”

“You were talking about the lake thing being a family event but you said ‘we all went up to the summer place.’”

“Oh, quite. Michael is a client of my firm, but we’re also best friends. Roomed together at Harvard and prepped at Choate before that. My wife and I are like family to Michael and Winnie, and Seth’s my godson.”

I said to Atlee, “Winnie’s your wife and Seth’s your son?”

He nodded and bit down on the pipestem.

“Any reason for Gina to take off?”

“None.” Decisively.

“Who else knows about your relationship with Gina?”

Lane said, “A woman named Marla—I’m afraid we don’t have her last name—lives in the next unit in Gina’s building and is aware of, ah . . .”

“Anybody else?”

Atlee fidgeted in his chair, I thought at first from impatience. Then he said, “Seth knows, or suspects. Same damned thing, I guess. Saw us

once together a couple of years ago in a bar over there. Slumming with one of his swim-team chums. Damned bad luck, but there it is."

I had the impression I'd been treated to Atlee's longest speech of the decade. "Any point in my talking with him?"

"No." Case closed.

Lane said, "That would be rather difficult anyway, John."

"Why is that?"

"You see, Seth is a junior at Stanford this year, and he always leaves the morning after Labor Day to head out there."

Atlee said, "Damned fool has to drive his Jeep three-thousand miles. Can't take the plane like a normal person."

"In any case," said Lane, "I had a call from him last night. He was near Pittsburgh and wasn't sure of his next destination."

I said, "He called you?"

Lane seemed affronted. "I am his godfather."

"All right. I'll need a photo of Gina and her address over in Revere."

Atlee said, "Don't have a photo."

"I'm sure you understand," said Lane.

Before I could reply, Atlee leaned forward, tapping his pipe on my desk for emphasis. "Just understand this. I really care for that girl. I may not show it,

but I do. And I want you to find her."

TWO

Revere Beach is an incongruous strip of old clamshacks and new highrise towers along a slightly polluted stretch of sand and ocean about ten miles north of Boston. I flashed the key Atlee had given me at the security guard, who smiled deferentially and used his magazine to wave me into the lobby. I took an elevator to the ninth floor.

Unit 9A was at the end of the hall. I had a little trouble with the lock, rattled it and the knob twice before the tumbler would turn. Inside, the apartment was airy, with a striking view of the Atlantic through sliding glass doors to a narrow balcony. Versatile sectional furniture for couch and chairs. Track lighting overhead, a wall unit with stereo, color TV, and even a few books.

I entered the bedroom and had been drawn toward some framed photos on the bureau when I thought I heard the snap and creak of a quick entry at the front door. I managed two steps before a perfectly tanned woman in a European string bikini appeared in the doorway to the living room. She leveled a tiny automatic at me and

said, "My boyfriend told me to just keep firing until the guy falls."

I got the hint.

"Gina and me watch each other's places, you know?"

"Good system."

"Look, at least I can make you a drink or something, huh?"

She was trying hard, a little too hard, to make up for the gun scene. My investigator's I.D. had convinced her I wasn't a "real" burglar, and she was pleased to introduce herself as Marla, the girl next door. I'd seen everything except the bedroom closet with nothing to show for it. Now she was watching me rummage through Gina's dresses, slacks, and shoes.

"So Mikey figures Gina's flown on him, huh?"

I liked her using "Mikey." I said over my shoulder, "That the way you see it?"

"Without telling me? And leaving all her stuff like this?" She paused. "Hard to say for sure, though. Gina's been a little restless lately."

I stopped searching and turned around. "Restless?"

"Yeah, well, it's not so easy being somebody's sweet harbor, you know? Waiting for a phone call, planning your life around a lunch here or there and some afternoon delight."

Somehow the phrase sounded

sweeter in the song. "Would she have left on her own?"

"Not likely. Gina enjoyed being took care of, even by a creep like Mikey."

"How do you mean?"

"Aw, we double-dated a couple months ago. Her and Mikey and this guy called himself 'Jim.' We drove up to Swampscott to go sailing, like they was afraid to do the class thing and go all the way to Marblehead, maybe one of their bigshot friends sees them there with two bimbettes from Revere."

"You ever see this Jim again?"

"No, but like I said, that wasn't his real name. Stupid guy, he drives us all up there in this big green Mercedes, like we're too dumb to know how to run a plate at the registry."

"You ran his license plate?"

"Yeah. Turns out he's another Cambridge highroller with, get this, the name 'Thayer Lane.'"

Ah, Mr. Lane. "This Lane seem interested in Gina?"

"Coulda been. I kept him pretty interested that day, I'll tell you. Never did hear back from him, though. Good old 'Jim.'"

"Gina ever mention Atlee's son?"

"Not really. Just that the father and him didn't get along too well."

"Some families are like that."

"Boy, you got that right." Her tone changed. "You got any pressing commitments after this here?"

I stuck my head back into the closet. There were three matching pieces of luggage; the size just up from the smallest seemed to be missing.

"Well, do you?"

"Marla," I said, pointing, "does Gina have a full set of these bags?"

She came over, pressing and rubbing more than my request required. "Uh-huh. Gina uses the other one for day-hops." She was wearing some kind of coconut-scented lotion.

"Meaning not overnight?"

Marla stepped back without answering. She kept going until her calves touched the bed, then sat back and onto her elbows, in one languid motion. She hooded her eyes. "Doesn't have to take all night, sugar."

Walking to the bureau, I picked up one of the photos. A girl about Marla's age, long frosted curls, winking at the lens.

"This Gina?"

She licked her lips. "Uh-huh."

"Recent?"

"Hair's a little shorter now. Let's talk about you. And me."

I think she was laughing as I went through the front door.

I stood up, put my hands in

my pockets. "Mrs. Feeney told me what they were, but it was some Latin name, and I forget it."

What happened to that elaborate altar boy training?

I looked at the purplish flowers with yellowish petals, then at her stone. Elizabeth Mary Devlin Cuddy. "Won't help me much with this one, Beth."

What's the problem?"

I told her.

An architect's mistress. Sor-did.

"It's about to get worse."

How?

"Tomorrow I intend to see his wife about their son."

THREE

The next morning I stopped at the office to hoke up a manila file folder and some documents, then took Memorial Drive to Cambridge. The Atlees' home was on one of those short streets off Brattle. An aggressively traditional mini-manse, it was surrounded by an outside fence nearly as tall as the trees behind it. I tapped a button on the intercom at the wrought-iron entrance and a minute later received a metallic, female "Yes?"

"Mrs. Atlee?"

"Yes?"

"My name is John Cuddy. I'm a private investigator and I'm

here about your son."

"My son? Is there some kind of problem?"

"No, no, ma'am. It's just that, well, it would be easier if I could show you the file."

Hesitation, then the grating buzz and click that tell you to push on the gate.

"And you say my son witnessed an accident?"

"Yes, ma'am." I slid the folder over to her, holding my index finger on the document in the middle of the Acco-clipped bunch till she held the place for herself and began reading it.

She was about Atlee's age, with strawberry-blond hair pulled severely behind her head. A peasant dress heightened the sense of bony strength about her. Striking, not beautiful, she probably sat an English saddle well, given some of the bronzed trophies on shelves in the den. The other statuettes looked like awards for swimming and shooting.

"But this isn't even my son's handwriting."

"No, ma'am. That's the handwriting of our Mr. Green, who's no longer our Mr. Green because he fouled up so much, like here when he took down your son's statement then forgot to have him date or sign it over... there."

She shook her head and handed me back the file. "Well,

I'm sure if Seth were here he'd be glad to help you, but he left for California on Tuesday."

I let my face fall. "Gee, Mrs. Atlee, this case is coming up for trial and all. Do you have a number where I can reach him?"

"Yes. Well, no. Not for a few more days. You see, he drives there, to return to Stanford, and he rather dawdles really, taking roads that interest him and stopping wherever."

"Does he call you?"

"Sometimes. Other times no. If we hear from him, we could ask him to call you, but it would probably be late at night and perhaps not at all."

"Is there anyone else he might call?"

She considered it. "Yes. His friend Doug Cather. Seth and Doug were on the swim team together at prep school, Doug's at Harvard now."

I looked past her to a photo on the mantel. A family portrait of a younger Atlee and wife behind a seated teenager.

"Is that Seth?"

She twisted around and looked back at me. "Yes." She darkened. "Is there something else?"

"No, no. He looks like a fine boy."

Doug Cather lived in Kirkland House, part of the not-quite-quadrangle of more-than-dorms nestled near the Charles

River. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and completely hairless.

"We shave our heads."

"Why?"

"For swimming. Cuts down on the drag effect in the water."

Anything for dear old Harvard, I guess. Cather accepted my bogus accident story.

"No, I haven't heard from Seth, which is kind of funny."

"You two stay in touch that closely?"

"Not really. It's just that he always calls me when he leaves for school, and I kind of waited around for it yesterday morning. Cut classes and all."

"Wait a minute. I thought Seth left for California on Tuesday. Yesterday was Wednesday."

Cather's face clouded over.

I said, "There's something you're not telling me."

"There's something I don't think is any of your business."

"Something about Seth?"

"Yeah."

"Look, I'm not going to give you a long song and dance about confidentiality. You don't know me at all, so you don't know if you can trust me."

"That's right."

"Okay. Here's my problem. I've got to find your friend. You can help me, or I can do it the hard way. Go see other people, his dad, whoever. That might mean I find out worse things than I need to know. All I can

say is if you tell me what's going on, I'll try to keep it to myself."

Cather didn't speak.

"We want Seth as a witness for us on this collision. I'm not about to spread rumors that would make him look bad."

"It's not..." He seemed to search inside for a moment. "I want your promise anyway. You won't tell anybody?"

"Promise."

He blew out a breath. "Okay, it's like this. After we graduated from Choate, Seth and I bounced around for the summer. One day we decide to go to Revere Beach, kind of scope out the other half, you know? Well, we dare each other to go into this bar. I mean, we're way underage and nobody's ever gonna serve us without I.D., but we try it anyway. Right off, I spot Seth's father in one of the booths, with a real tough... a really sharp-looking chick just a couple of years older than us. So I start to say something, and Seth sees them and gets all up-tight. He's kind of impulsive anyhow, and he bolts out of there and like won't even talk with me all the way home."

"What's that got to do with his driving to California?"

"Well, it didn't take a genius to see what his dad was doing there, and I guess Seth and him had a real blow-up over it. Anyway, Seth decides not to go out

for swimming at Stanford, like to punish his dad, I guess. But every year his family has this Labor Day thing to please his mom. So, okay, after Seth gets home from the weekend each year, he goes back up there."

"Seth goes back?"

"Right. He tells his parents he's leaving for school, and he does, sort of, but first he drives up to Parker Pond and does the swim."

"The swim."

"Yeah. He swims out from their property to this little island and back. It's like a ritual, I guess, to prove he can still go the distance. And maybe to think about when he was younger and he didn't, well, know about his dad."

"Would Seth sleep over in Maine on that Tuesday night?"

"Definitely. It's almost four hours to get there, and he probably wouldn't leave his parents in Cambridge much before lunchtime."

"You ever been to this Parker Pond house?"

"Sure. Lots of times."

"Can you draw me a map?"

FOUR

Even with Doug Cather's sketch, I had to stop at an inn on the main road for supplemental direc-

tions. A turnoff went from paved to gravel to hard-packed dirt. Then I saw rutted tracks curve off the road, a primitive driveway running under a white toll-gate. Leaving the car, I walked up to the gate. A single horizontal bar, very freshly painted, was hinged on one of two posts and swung inward freely.

The day was warm, the only sounds the wind in the trees and a woodpecker pocking away nearby. I decided to approach more quietly than my old Fiat would allow. I tossed my sport coat into the front seat and switched on the hazard lights. Ducking under the gate bar, I started walking.

The driveway doglegged right to insure privacy and squiggled here and there to avoid particularly substantial pines. Passing the last big tree, I spotted the back of the house.

A black Jeep Wrangler was parked at the mouth of an adjoining shed.

I moved through the underbrush and approached the shed, keeping it between me and the large chalet-style house behind it. I stopped at the side of the shed to listen. No noise from inside.

Edging toward the front, I looked through the webby pane at the shed's door. Paint buckets, rake and lawnmower, gasoline can, etc. The Jeep was

stuffed to the roof with the odd-lot cartons and containers students use to return to college.

I circled around the house. Every door and window seemed sealed tight. The wind was really howling lakeside, kicking whitecaps against the shoreline.

At the back door, I knocked, waited, and knocked again louder. Inside I could see the kitchen area. Using a rock to break the glass, I was hit with the stench as I opened the door itself. I gagged and tried to close off my nasal passages with the back of my tongue. Grabbing a dish rag off the rack over the sink, I took it to the shed and doused it with gasoline. I held the rag to my face and went back inside.

He was lying on the floor of the great room, cathedral ceiling above him. A dry pair of swim trunks and a beach towel lay on a chair next to him. At his side, a carefully carved and scrolled double-barreled shotgun, one hand around the trigger mechanism. His face was bloated, the head connected only by the few tendons the blast had left of his neck. Seth Atlee, a marionette past all mending.

Gina was on the open, slatted staircase leading to the upper level. Naked, she'd taken the other barrel between the shoulder blades and would have been

dead before her nose struck the tenth step.

The house was twenty degrees hotter than the ambient temperature outside. I didn't think my gasoline filter would support a telephone call in-doors.

I pulled the door closed and walked slowly down the driveway. At the gate, I noticed what seemed to be a grass stain on the house side of the swing bar, stark against the gleaming white. Like someone had scraped the inner edge of the bar against a car.

I started the Fiat and drove to the inn to learn about law enforcement in Maine.

FIVE

The funeral was scheduled for Saturday afternoon, beginning from a mortuary on Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge. I got there early and parked a block away. Even announced murder/suicides draw large numbers of sincere mourners these days. I watched the arrivals of Michael and Winnie Atlee, Doug Cather, and Thayer Lane with a woman I took to be his wife.

Forty minutes later, the crowd came back out, repairing to private cars to form the procession. I left the Fiat. Pausing at Lane's Mercedes, I could see the

lawyer on the porch of the funeral home, bending slightly at the waist and using both hands to shake hands gently with a short, elderly woman. I caught his eye. He glared at me. I smiled and beckoned. He excused himself, moving stiff-legged over to me.

"Counsellor."

"Mr. Cuddy, don't you think it a bit tasteless for you to appear here?"

"What I think is that Seth didn't kill Gina or himself."

Lane stopped fussing.

I said, "How long did you figure it'd take before they were found?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"The bodies. Buttoned up in the house and all. Seth would be reported missing by his college after a while, but who would think to check the lake place?"

"What in the world kind of question is that?"

"You see, the longer the wait, the tougher to peg time of death. After a couple of weeks, no one would swear to anything shorter than a few, bracketed, days."

"Mr. Cuddy, I really must get back."

"You didn't want me searching for Gina so quickly after Atlee couldn't raise her. You double-dated with him, Gina, and Marla once. Gina was restless, maybe you caught each other's fancy."

"Preposterous."

"But Atlee's a big client and an old friend. So you needed a safe place to try your luck. None safer than the summer home you helped close up the day before."

"I'm not going to—"

"Listen any more? You've listened too much as it is, Lane. An innocent man would have walked already."

He clenched his teeth. "Finish it then."

"You didn't know about Seth's ritual swim. I'm guessing you were in the sack with Gina when Seth burst in downstairs. He would have seen your car. Did he call out to you? 'Hey, Uncle Thayer, you upstairs?'"

Lane looked clammy, unsteady.

"You jump out of bed, try to pull some clothes on. Seth's in good shape, though, takes the steps two at a time. Sees you in the nearly altogether with the woman he recognizes as his dad's mistress. He goes nuts, runs back downstairs, gets a skeet gun. He loads it and comes back, back to purge the stain from the one place he still thought was family inviolate."

"No, no."

"You try to reason with him in the great room, Gina following you down the stairs. A struggle, the gun wavers toward Seth as somebody hits the trigger. Seth goes down, Gina

yells, 'You murdered him!' Or maybe she just starts screaming, screaming till you lock onto her as a target and she—"

"You can't prove a word of this!"

"No?" I gestured toward the hood of his Mercedes. "Those gouge marks. You put them there when you swung the gate in to leave the place on Tuesday."

He blinked, trying to make the scratches go away. "They . . . they . . ."

"Freshly painted gate, two days before. If you'd taken a piece out of the car driving back Monday, the missus would remember it. The kind of thing that would spoil the whole weekend."

"Seth, he called me . . ."

I shook my head. "Nobody called you Tuesday night, because Seth didn't call his friend Wednesday morning. I'm betting the medical examiner saw the bodies soon enough to place both deaths on Tuesday afternoon. The phone alibi would have been perfect in a few more weeks. Now it's going to hang you."

"Thayer? Thayer!"

We both turned.

Michael Atlee was chopping his hand toward the lead limousine. For the godfather.

Lane whispered. "What are you . . ."

"Going to do? I'm going to give you a chance here, Thayer. Mikey there is your best friend, right?"

"I . . . yes he is, but—"

"Then sometime in the next two days you're going to tell him all about it."

"Money. You want money."

"I don't want money, Thayer. I was hired to find Gina Fiore. I found her and was paid. Now you're going to do your job. You're going to be the first to tell your best friend how his mistress and son really died."

"Thayer!" called Atlee, striding determinedly toward us.

Lane said, "But for God's sake, Cuddy, that's not how it happened! The way you said, it wasn't like that."

"Maybe not. You've got till Tuesday to come up with a better version."

I walked back to my car.

FICTION

The Pulpbook Detective's Wife

by Dana M. Anderson

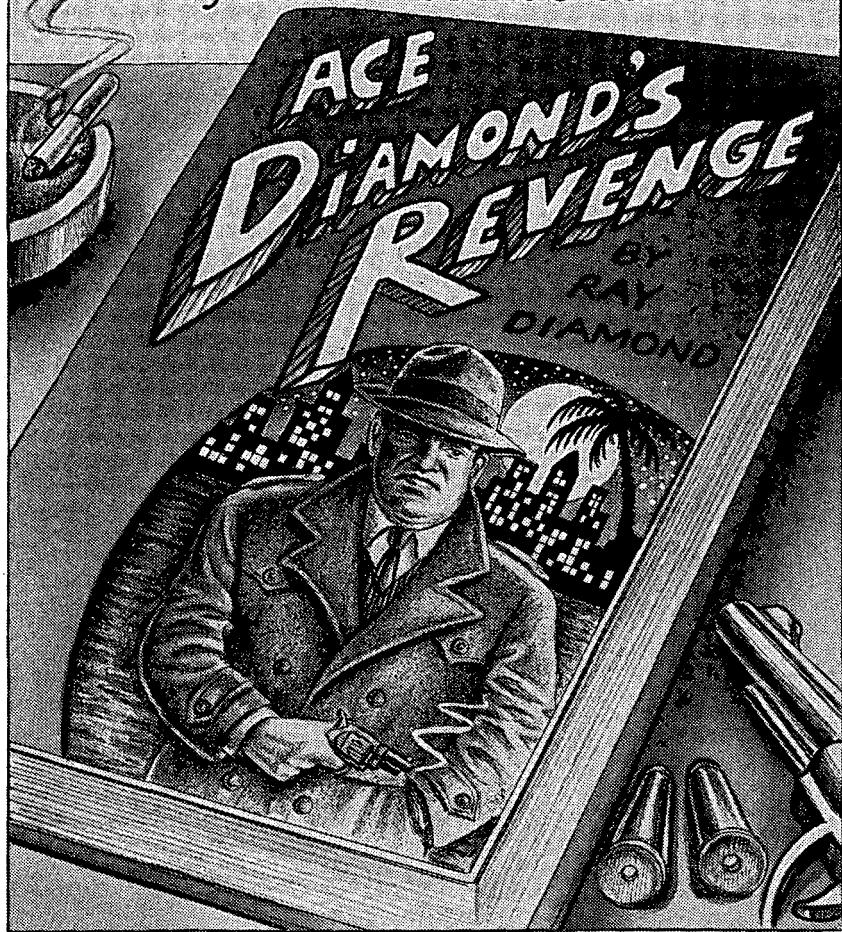


Illustration by Peter D. Fagolino

22
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I read a putrid book once. Actually, I've read several real stinkers in the course of my literary lifetime but only one that has any bearing on the matter at hand. The tome in question was titled *Ace Diamond's Revenge*, and it concerned the efforts of a macho detective to clean up the L.A. criminal element. The hero, Ace Diamond, didn't do much detecting, mostly just shooting and punching and grinding his "size twelves on the faces of the pandering vermin" who'd been foolish enough to try fighting it out with him. A real man, that Ace Diamond—Rambo in a cheap suit.

In truth, I read less than half of it, then skipped to the end and threw the book in the trash. I didn't feel terribly put out by having wasted my money on it: It was the time I regretted.

That was a long time ago, when I was doing security work in Detroit. I got into the detective business myself after that, with my own little office in an Art Deco building located in the almost-slums downtown. Business was good, and I could afford a better place, but I liked it where I was so I hung on and waited for urban renewal. Besides, I was too cheap to move.

My name is Michael Evans.

I wouldn't trust an investigator who called himself Ace.

I was sitting in my office trying to decide if I should wait for business to walk in or go to the bank and deposit the check for my last job. I was fanning Melanie Martin's check at my face when the outer door opened and another large fee walked in.

He was a tall guy in a loose sport coat with a wide-brimmed fedora on his head, tall and square-shouldered like a football player but gone to seed, his belly pushing his coat open, haunches straining his trousers.

"Evans?" He grinned, creating a gleaming gash in his pudgy face, a vein-tracked visage as soft and white as a toad's belly.

I confirmed his impression that Evans was my name, a third of it, anyway, and put on my most dependable expression. For his part, he swaggered in and extended a hand for shaking.

I shook it.

"Diamond, Ray Diamond." He retracted his hand and fell back into the hard chair before my desk. "Doll Martin turned me onto you 'cause of the grand job you did on her ex. She's a pretty well-heeled client for a dick who hangs his hat in a dump like this, but I suppose it's the perfect setting for the work you do. I'm in the market for a

snoop, if your rate isn't too high. But I'll warn you that I'm the wrong guy for gouging, shamus."

"Once," I answered, "in a period of great boredom, I actually read one of your books, *Diamond*." I smiled.

"I wouldn't 'a picked you as the literary type. How'd ya like it?"

"I never made the mistake of reading another one."

That's my main failing as a human being. I get all defensive when some turkey wanders in calling me a "dick" and a "snoop" and suggesting that I lower my rates for the honor of working for him. I get rude. I hope he'll go away, but if he doesn't, I plan to take the jerk for every penny I can get. Some days I'm just too sensitive to live.

He forced a sour smile. "So, what's your fee for divorce work?" The word *divorce* was mouthed with obvious distaste.

"Depends."

"On what?"

"How much can you afford?"

He grinned and rubbed one hand over his bloated jaw. "I like your spunk, Evans." It was a minor concession. He obviously intended to hire me no matter how big a jerk I planned to be. "I pay what a service is worth, and this could be worth a fair piece of change. I want a

tail on my wife. I tried it, but she knows my car. I couldn't stay close enough. Doll says you're the best, and though she does tend to run at the mouth, I believe her. You see, my old lady has a young stud on the side and I want to know who he is. I want dirt, Evans, everything you can get on the boyfriend. Get me some ammunition."

"How long has it been going on?"

I scribbled on my notepad and watched him talk. His eyes made small shifting movements, darting around excitedly in his skull as he spoke.

"I don't know how long." He frowned. "Three months that I know of for sure." He didn't sound sad. "Every Thursday night she goes to play bridge, but that's a crock. Sometimes other nights, too."

"Days?"

"How would I know? She shops a lot." His tongue slid over his upper teeth. "So, what's the bill on a tail?"

"It's more than a tail. You want a background check on the guy."

"Fine, a background check. What's the damage?"

"You'll probably want me to search his apartment."

"Whatever it takes. Get what I want and you'll have a friend for life, shamus."

"I don't need friends, Ray, just money. I generally charge about five grand for divorce work, but I don't fabricate evidence."

"Steep, ain't it?" Now he sounded sad.

"No. This is a major undertaking on my part. It might take quite a while to get what you want. I've got to tail her and then do research on him. Jealousy is an expensive emotion, Ray, and you won't get a cheaper price from anyone who can get the job done." I had decided not to soak him, but not to hand out any discounts either.

"Fair enough. What'll it take to get you going?"

"One thousand now."

I traded a receipt for his check and got some notes on his wife and her routine before standing to usher him out. He slapped me on the back and called me a "good egg." Maybe I am, but I had the feeling that my food value at that point was more akin to that of an all-day sucker.

I didn't know how to take the guy. He acted like a kid who'd seen a lot of Bogart films but hadn't got the lisp down right. He probably would have described me as "feeling hinkey" after he left.

But my feelings weren't an issue. I enjoy taking money from people I don't like.

I took my gray Jaguar sedan out to the address he'd given me. It was a self-important Victorian palace on an avenue of three story mansions surrounded by manicured gardens and pet forests. It took up the high ground in the midst of a small grove of maple trees, all surrounded by a ten foot wall of stone. I looked it over from various angles, spotting a woman lounging by the pool who matched the photograph he'd given me, and after satisfying myself that the wide iron gates on the street were the only entrance, I settled down to wait for her blue Mercedes.

She left the grounds at two thirty-eight P.M. and I followed her downtown.

My quarry was a fine looking woman named Frances Elaine Bridger, a child of money who married a rising pulp writer in the early seventies. She was willing enough to take the name of Whitland, the name Ray Diamond was born into, but not the name Diamond, so she kept her own. The Bridgers were railroad and banking money, while Diamond was no money. He made his dough over the next years through royalties, movie deals, and a short-lived comic book version of his hero. So, while he wasn't exactly on welfare, his contribution to the family estate was compara-

tively minimal and recent. It made divorce an unlikely motive for my employment.

Ray was gone a lot over the years, jetting off to L.A. or New York on a weekly basis while the little woman kept the home fires burning. The arrangement suited her just fine, for dissatisfaction had set in early in the heart of Frances Elaine. It looked as though she was finally doing something about it.

Very little of that information came from Ray. What I did know about the woman in the Mercedes came from *Who's Who* and from a short telephone conversation with Melanie "Doll" Martin. I told her that Ray had hired me as a consultant for a book, but she didn't believe that for a minute. Ray, she told me, had never done a second's research in his life and was too old a dog to start now. She did promise to keep our conversation out of the newspapers.

I followed Ms. Bridger into a furrier downtown where she spent forty minutes selecting a coat to go with her tawny hair. I played hick gawking at the prices, catching an occasional glimpse of her over a handful of sable. The time her husband had spent going to flab hadn't done her any harm at all. She was beautiful, with high cheekbones and clear blue eyes, and with lips that held an enig-

matic smile as though she were laughing at some remembered joke.

I left ahead of her and followed her to several boutiques featuring expensive designer apparel, then to the offices of Cardinal Communications, the local cable TV company, where she spent twenty minutes talking to a tall, athletic guy behind the desk. That was her last stop for the day.

The next day, Wednesday, she stayed home.

Thursday contained one trip to the furrier and a quick stop to chat with Mr. Cable TV. That evening, Mr. and Mrs. Diamond attended a party at Camille Winston's place. I mingled my older but tasteful Jag with the limos parked out front and watched.

"On the job, gun-heel?" Ray spotted my happy face watching from the car and trotted out for a chat about forty minutes after he escorted his wife inside.

"She's clean so far, Diamond." I yawned.

"Yeah, you can knock off for tonight. Somebody might notice. Nice car. Buy it new?"

"Police auction. Impound."

"Figures." He grinned, tapping the buttons on his jacket sleeve on the car door and breathing whisky in my face. "I'm giving you a break, sha-

mus. I'll be out of town for the weekend. That ought to get something going."

"If there is anything going."

"There is. She's just playing it cool."

I knew full well she hadn't gone to the cable company to complain about the bill, but didn't want to give him any satisfaction till I had it all wrapped up.

"Want pictures?" I asked.

"Skip that. I want dirt on her gigolo. I don't want to divorce the bimbo, just straighten her out some."

"Forget it, Ray." I smiled up at him. "You're headed for divorce no matter what I come up with."

"It'll work. My wife is a woman with a conscience. Just get a handle on her boy." He gave me a jaunty, two finger salute and waddled back to the party.

I called it a night, thinking that a woman with a conscience would be doing the right thing by dumping the fat boy ASAP. The two of them together was a sight I couldn't quite focus in my mind.

They rose late Friday morning, loaded two suitcases into the Mercedes, and drove out to the airport. She saw him off with a kiss as passionate as a

lawyer's handshake and left without watching the plane take off. She was smiling as she walked out to the car.

She stopped at the cable company and a gourmet food store on her way home, where she locked the car up in the garage behind the Victorian megahouse. I broke for lunch.

I was waiting inside the wall when Mr. Cable TV arrived at seven o'clock that evening. He drove through the gate in a '79 Plymouth and parked it under a large maple by the garage. My man was wearing a corduroy jacket and new jeans and carried a bouquet of pink roses. My, how cute.

I sneaked up to the window and watched them sup on cheese and caviar and drink champagne on a couch before the fire. They made a lovely couple. After assuring myself that they were well occupied I moved on to the matter of the young man's car.

Jason Pederson, thirty-one, had just bought four new radial tires for the dusty Plymouth and had the engine tuned. So said a receipt from Al's Standard on West Avenue. It was marked paid. The registration card said he lived at 129 Highland Avenue, Apartment 12. I remembered the address as that of a highrise warehouse for singles who didn't mind thin walls. The car contained nothing else

but the usual automobile trash, so I locked it back up and stole quietly into the night.

Jason's apartment was next on the agenda.

He kept a clean place: no dirty laundry piled at the foot of the bed, no dried toothpaste on the sink, all of which gave me the impression that his apartment was the usual location of their trysts. Maybe the lad was just naturally neat.

I frisked the desk first.

A file of legal papers pertaining to a divorce action two years earlier explained some of his neatness. He'd already been broken in. Jason and Barbara Pederson had ended a five-year childless marriage by mutual consent. No alimony was asked, none given.

Other papers identified him as a graduate with honors from the business administration program at the state college. He was co-owner of Cardinal Communications, and had ten grand left on a business loan to prove it. His partner and co-signer was a gent named Brad Caldwell, a name well known from my own cable payments to Caldwell Cable Communications.

His personal financial files were more interesting. Up until the last month he had owed money on five separate credit accounts, each in excess of three

hundred dollars. The latest bills, however, were all paid in full—about sixteen hundred and ninety bucks. Another slip stated that he had paid the remaining eight hundred and twenty dollars on his student loan in full. With five twenty for tires and tune added in, I estimated a bill-paying spree of about three grand. I didn't bother to add in utilities and rent or estimate groceries. Yet his tax statement gave him an income of around twenty-two grand, not enough for that kind of behavior.

I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt, telling myself that if I had a rich girlfriend I'd let her help me out, too. It was a hard sell.

He subscribed to several magazines tending toward the liberal persuasion, was a member of the ACLU, and had done work for Mondale's campaign. No dirt there.

His liquor cabinet held fifths of vodka, rum, scotch, and bourbon. Five plastic-bound cans of Olympia sat in the fridge. There was no evidence of drugs in the apartment.

I found some old love letters and a picture of his ex-wife. Nothing exceptional.

I copied his social security and driver's license numbers, along with his credit account numbers, into my notebook. I

couldn't find his savings book but got his checking number from his statement, which showed a balance of one hundred and ten dollars.

That was enough for one night.

I spent the next Monday morning prying information out of his bank. He had a savings account total of nine hundred and thirty dollars and had put four hundred into checking two days earlier.

The credit bureau listed him as having a history of late payments and nearly canceled charge accounts, but current reports proclaimed him clean. That left the business loan as his only outstanding debt.

Apparently, she was helping him with his debts, but, for a woman with assets in the millions, it wasn't much of an investment. If he was after her money he surely could have had his business paid for by now.

Ray Diamond invaded my office at one twenty that afternoon.

"Well?" A smile looked obscene on his bloated face.

"His name is Jason Pederson, co-owner of Cardinal Cable, thirty-one, divorced, liberal, and financially solvent. He spent the weekend in your bed." I did my best to match his leer. "He's as clean as possible for thirty-

one years of living on this planet."

"I want to know how this geek spends his days, Evans. The stud probably has another doll stashed away somewhere."

"I don't think he was ever a geek, boss. I didn't find a union card."

"Don't crack wise, kid. You haven't been paid yet. Tail him. Find out where they meet. How often. I want the lowdown on those two." He leaned across my desk and squinted at me. Maybe he wasn't doing a Bogart impression. Maybe he was doing Sidney Greenstreet doing Bogart.

"Why do you want this stuff?" I asked him. "You want to know everything, but don't want pictures. You claim that you want to avoid a divorce, but I don't believe that you honestly think anything I find will save the marriage. You've both got your own money, no kids, and the neighborhood gossip says you aren't much of a husband. Her next move will be to pack you out the door. I've seen it before."

"You just do your job. I'll pay your fee when it's finished."

"Why waste the money? A hot-shot detective writer like you should be able to do this on his head. You could find out where they meet for the price of a rental car."

"I'm not a leg man, Evans. I

hire work done and I expect you to do it. I pay for results, not backtalk."

That ended our conversation for the day.

No, he wasn't a leg man. He was a pulpbook detective grown fat on his wife's money and his success in the market for murder and mayhem books. He didn't need his wife's money but couldn't bear to part with the social standing a few million gave him. The man was a consumer with a capital C. The only question was how he'd managed to keep her with him for this long.

I gave him another week. Jason Pederson's daily routine was as neat as his apartment. He was at work at nine sharp, spending the day doing whatever cable TV people do all day, and back home by six. He met my client's wife twice during the week, both times for two hours in the evening at his apartment.

I took notes full of time schedules and other official looking garbage and typed it up in an impressive folder of fifteen padded pages. I traded the folder for another two grand and called it quits. I was rid of Ray Diamond.

The next step was to put the money in the bank and move on to other business. Right? After all, I'm just a private dick with no conscience and no more mo-

rality than a dirty dollar bill, answering to no man and bound to no woman. Right. Grow up. Just because I took his money doesn't mean I trusted the guy. I trusted my gut, and it said he was bad news.

I had time to kill. I spent it following my former employer.

On Tuesday afternoon, Diamond spent three hours in a small bar downtown. Lost in the decaying structure of the inner city, it wasn't exactly the kind of place he normally hung his hat. He left hurriedly, stuffing a small package into his jacket pocket and giving the street a nervous eye on the way to his car. He made one stop at a newsstand on the way home, a bookie joint.

Playing a vague hunch, I lied my way in for a look at his phone bill for the last month. He had more than his share of calls to Las Vegas. I called the number and was told by a cool female voice that I had reached the private office of Mr. Robert Guardino. Mr. Guardino was a casino operator known for his willingness to lend patrons large amounts of money to lose at his tables. He was also known to charge a monumental rate of interest. So, my boy was in hock.

I had him pegged as a boozer, not a user, so I didn't have any quick answer to the riddle of the package and the seedy bar.

I kept up my shadow routine all Tuesday and Wednesday but he never went back downtown.

He left the house at noon Thursday and drove directly to Pederson's apartment building. I followed closely enough to watch him break two credit cards forcing his way into the apartment. He came out fifteen minutes later and waddled out to his car, tossing a crumpled ball of paper into the bushes as he got in and drove away.

It was a plain brown wrapping paper crumpled around a small plastic bag. There was a trace of white powder in the bag. I wasn't familiar with the taste of the powder but a little dab made my head spin quite nicely for a couple of minutes. Mickey Finn was in.

I spotted his car in the lot by Rite Price Liquors two blocks down from the apartment. He was just coming out with a box holding four large bottles.

I picked up the tail that night and waited as he waited on the street with a view of Pederson's window. It was "bridge night" and she was inside.

I watched their shadows moving across the drawn shades. The movements stopped. The lights remained on. It became ten thirty with no further movement apparent inside the apartment. Ray Diamond left his car wearing a tan raincoat and a false mustache. I kid you

not, the clown was wearing a fake cookie-duster. He was carrying the box of booze.

I didn't wait long after he'd fumbled his way into the apartment. When I walked in he was busy folding Pederson's fingers around the necks of the bottles he'd bought that afternoon. The bottles from Pederson's supply were in the box.

"Tampering with evidence?"

I announced my presence.

Diamond dropped the limp hand and bounded to his feet.

"Evans? What the hell?" He stepped back, tripped on Pederson's sprawled form, and went down on his ample posterior.

"While you're down there, you can give me the gun." I moved in close enough to kick him if he got any strange notions.

"What gun?" Sweat ran down the side of his face.

"There wouldn't be much point to all this if you didn't have a gun." I smiled. "Maybe I should just kick your face in and take it away. Come on."

He pulled a .38 out of his coat pocket and handed it to me.

"Haven't you got anything to say, smart guy?"

"This isn't what it looks like, peeper."

"That's an original line. Get up."

"Really, Evans, I'm just here to scare them a little."

"I'll bet. I know it would scare

me to wake up dead."

"Come on, you don't believe that." He stumbled to his feet, mustache slipping on one side.

"You drugged the booze this afternoon using an as-of-yet unidentified powder. You waited till they were sleeping nicely, then came in to replace the doctored liquor and finish up. I'm curious whether you were planning a murder-suicide, or if you were going to let him wake up with a dead body and a lousy alibi."

"You're crazy, Evans." He was quivering, standing hunched into his lard like a schoolyard bully caught beating up the little kids. I felt like hitting him with a chair.

"Get out of here." I took a couple of menacing steps with his gun held loosely at my side.

"What are you going to do?"

"It wasn't very bright of you to hire me. If you weren't so damn lazy you might have pulled it off. Did you really think that my flimsy report on the two of them would seem like enough motivation for all this? A smart woman like your wife wouldn't be bullied into breaking off the affair and Joe College wouldn't fly off his nut and start shooting over anything I reported to you. No, you were desperate. You figured my investigation would supply the proper background for the

deaths. That was a big mistake. You must have one hell of a bill in Vegas to be that stupid."

"How did you know?"

"I'm a detective." I grinned and waved the gun at him. "Get out of here before I lose my manners."

He ran.

His wife was slouched against one arm of the couch, her blouse open, a squat glass balanced precariously in one hand. She was breathing slowly but regularly. I took the glass away and moved her feet up onto the couch, making her as comfortable as possible.

Pederson was snoring away on the floor at her feet. I left him alone.

I dumped the drugged liquor down the sink and left the empties in his trash. They'd have headaches when they woke up. Headaches and a mystery. I hoped it would be enough of a mystery to bring matters to a proper conclusion.

Matters came to a fitting conclusion, all right.

Ray Diamond sauntered into my office a couple of months after I kicked him out of Jason's apartment. His smile was nervous, but his clothes still looked sharp. He'd lost some weight.

"Maybe you're an all right

guy, Evans," he announced, plopping down in the chair before my desk without invitation. "You fixed my wagon good, but you didn't rat on me. I appreciate that."

"It's nice to be appreciated. What are you doing here?"

"I need an intermediary, a middleman in certain business dealings. What's your fee to meet with some people for me?"

"You can't afford it."

"Don't be so sure." He winked, grinning. "It's not as though I'll end up paying alimony or anything. I'd have done a damn sight better on an alienation of affections charge if you'd come through with your end of our deal, but I've got my own bucks."

"If you've got money, then you don't need an intermediary, do you?" It was my turn to smile.

"Sure, but these boys don't understand royalty schedules, Evans. They want it now, not in four months. You owe me a job, shamus."

"You've certainly got nerve, if not money." I laughed. "Because asking me to help you out of your jam would either take a lot of nerve or an extreme lack of brains. You could use this

scene in one of your books."

"Come on, Evans. So, I screwed up. I was under pressure." He wasn't smiling any more, and the greasy sheen of nervous sweat grew on his upper lip. "But nobody got hurt, and she'll end up with her boyfriend. There should be a happy ending in this for me, too."

"No. I don't help set up murders, and I don't get between people in the matter of gambling debts. Your problem is that you think all private detectives are as sleazy as the ones in your books. That just ain't so, Ray. So, in the words of your vernacular, why don't you blow before I get out of my chair and knock you into next week?"

I stared at him. He tried smiling. I stood up. He left without an exit line.

A couple of weeks later, I read about how my favorite author met with an accident. The report was rather unclear, but somehow he managed to break all of his fingers and both of his knees. We get what we give, I guess. I had a feeling that Ray might find a book in the experience. It might even be a good one.

FICTION

The Note

by Judith O'Neill



Illustration by George Thompson

Inspector Margaret McCoy, semi-bludgeoned by the noise emanating through the screen door of her kitchen as she got out of her blue Datsun in the driveway, once again felt relief at the normality of the incredible din.

Her seventh grader, Brian, appeared on the other side of the screen. "Hi, Mom," he shouted above the radio, the electric mixer, the TV, and other voices. "Jeff's cooking again." He giggled.

He opened the screen for her and she was greeted with the sight of her eldest son, a gangling sixteen-year-old, his glasses sliding down to the end of his short nose, intent on the bowl into which he was whirling the portable mixer. Both he and the dark-haired girl beside him raised their eyes. The girl, Sandy, from next door, smiled. Jeff just nodded and returned to the serious task at hand.

"What's this?" she asked, walking over to the island counter in the middle of the kitchen, reaching for the radio on her way.

"A soufflé," Jeff yelled triumphantly over the noise of the mixer. Margaret met Sandy's dark brown eyes.

"Isn't that a little . . . ambitious?" Margaret asked.

"It's really just eggs and

cheese," Sandy said reassuringly. Margaret nodded.

"Mom," Jeff explained at the top of his lungs, "if I can come up with something fancy like this, it will knock out the grades I got for the crumbly cookies and the runny rum cake. You *have* to let me try it on you guys."

Margaret raised her eyebrows.

"How was *your* day?" Jeff yelled.

"Murder," she said ruefully and they all smiled at the old, worn joke.

She shook her head and went into the living room to shed her shoes and stretch out for a few minutes on the sofa. She automatically reached to turn off the TV.

Then, of course, the scene she had left earlier that afternoon came back to her. The tiny old lady so still in the wide bed. The empty porcelain cup in the translucent saucer on the table beside her. The weeping sister, uncannily resembling the deceased, huddled in the chair at the foot of the bed.

"She was so depressed," the sister had cried, "so distressed over things. But I never dreamed . . . never . . . that she would do anything like this."

The two sisters had separate apartments in the same building. The deceased, Edna Wells,

at seventy-five the eldest by three years, had lived on the fourth floor. Gladys had been downstairs on the second. "I'm terrified of heights," Gladys had later confided to Margaret. Edna had lived quite well on money left to her by her third husband. "She was so *lucky* when it came to men. She took such *chances* sometimes, going out with men she'd barely been properly introduced to."

Gladys had been an executive secretary until her retirement and since had done overflow work for her old boss. Edna had apparently helped Gladys when needed, having retired earlier from "some glamorous job in the travel industry."

"She just went down at age sixty-five and enrolled in a night school class and learned to type. She was always doing things like that. I told her over and over it's a wonder she wasn't attacked on the street."

They had both had word processors, on loan from Gladys's former company.

"Edna could never accept old age," Gladys had confided to Margaret as she had assisted the older woman down to her own apartment. "She was always very spoiled, you know, very headstrong. Mama and Papa let her have her way in everything, why, she barely

managed to graduate from sixth grade, too social to study."

Margaret remembered the shocked look the older woman had given her when she said, "Miss Freeman, we have made no concrete determination that this was suicide."

Gladys had actually gaped. "Why, what do you mean? What else could it possibly be? Of course it was suicide, who . . . who would want her dead?" The words hung there. "Of course it was suicide," Gladys said hurriedly.

"I'm afraid we can't determine that yet, Miss Freeman. All we know until Forensics finishes is that she has died of unknown causes."

"But her empty bottle of sleeping pills, and she had become so sad. She had always been very pretty, you know," she said. "She was never elected Queen of the May, of course, like I was—twice in high school. No, Edna was very pretty but, well, I was the one who inherited Mama's beauty." She looked at Margaret's smooth face. "You're still quite pretty. But it fades, my dear, everything fades," she said quietly.

Margaret nodded.

"What is it that makes you believe it could be anything but suicide?" Gladys asked.

"Well," Margaret said, "not all suicides leave notes, but

most do. I will need to check with other acquaintances, her doctor."

Gladys said sadly, "She was in her late seventies, you know." She bowed her head. "And she had recently had an . . . unhappy . . . romance."

Margaret sighed. She had been, for reasons she didn't care to study too closely, desperately hoping that at some age one grew uninterested in the opposite sex. After getting the name of the other party in the romance, Mr. Gerald Murphy, and the names of other close friends, Margaret left.

Mr. Murphy proved to be a robust, red-cheeked, white-haired resident of the same building on the fifteenth floor. "I can't believe it," he kept repeating. "I just can't believe it. She was frisky as could be yesterday. We went for a walk in the park in the early evening. She was fine."

"Miss Freeman, her sister, says that you and she had had an . . ." she pounced thankfully on Gladys's phrasing, "an unhappy romance."

Mr. Murphy snorted. "The only thing unhappy about our romance was Gladys," he said emphatically. "She didn't like me taking up so much of Edna's time. We were going to get married anyway, though. Edna was going to move up here with me."

"Married? Had you announced this?"

"No," he said quietly, looking sad. "Edna wanted to break it to Gladys that she'd have to ride up a few more flights on the elevator to visit her sister."

The mixer in her kitchen suddenly went off and Margaret could hear another voice, a deep male voice. The only problem with Sandy from next door, Margaret thought, closing her eyes, was that she came equipped with a widowed father. A wiry, dark-haired history teacher of a father who looked at her, Margaret, with shining dark eyes.

He appeared in her living room doorway and she started to swing her feet down.

"Don't get up, don't get up," he insisted.

She relaxed back onto the sofa. She had attempted at first to be stiff and formal with the new neighbor when he had moved into the house on the other side of her driveway two years ago, but in truth, she knew there was little they had not learned about each other.

Their driveways were eight feet apart. There is nothing you can keep from someone separated by eight feet of green lawn, she now knew, especially if it is trespassed daily by three teenagers carrying sweaters, games, skates, balls . . . and

tidbits of highly personal information.

Mike Andrews sank down into one of the soft chairs across from the sofa and smiled at her.

"We've been invited for dinner," he said. "Honest," he continued in his own defense, "I came looking for Sandy, and Jeff is determined to use us for guinea pigs."

She nodded ruefully. They ate either in her house or his at least three or four times a week.

"I'll contribute a salad and I think we've got some French bread and ice cream," he said.

She smiled at him. She couldn't help but like him. He was not much taller than she, but his whole being was charged with energy. Even sitting still in the overstuffed chair he leaned forward as he talked, his elbows on his knees, his strong brown hands emphasizing his words. She noticed those hands a great deal. They were squarish and tanned. Even though he taught, he was constantly outside.

"Hard day?" he asked, watching her intently.

She smiled. "Nothing like yours, I'm sure," she said. "Mine had only murder, suicides, blackmail, etc., etc., but you've been trapped all day in a school full of teenagers." She shook her head. "I wouldn't trade."

He nodded agreement. "I

doubt you could take it," he said, mock-seriously. Sometimes she wondered. He had volunteered for the toughest, meanest, poorest high school in the city.

A committed man, she thought—a loving, caring, fun, committed man who looks at me with dark, admiring eyes. Oh, no, never, never, *never* again!

Kids and career, kids and career. She had decided that ten years ago when her husband left her with two small children and no job. One broken heart per lifetime. Dates, okay. Friends, okay. Not *ever* again this . . . this . . . closeness.

The phone rang in the kitchen. She heard Jeff's voice and then he appeared in the doorway. "It's Sergeant Jones down at the station," he said to his mother. "He says there's a little old lady there with a suicide note."

The next night, Margaret had a copy of the Xeroxed note at the table. It was a rare night in that only Sandy was eating with them; Mike had had to stay late at school. The soufflé had come off nicely, and Jeff was still basking in a successful glow as they munched on the tuna fish in pita bread Brian had volunteered to fix.

"Well, Mom," Jeff said, peering critically into the interior of his pita bread to annoy Brian, "where does she say it was?"

"She says it was in her mail, which she just got around to looking at. She thinks her sister must have slipped it in the evening before and then gone upstairs, got ready for bed, and drunk her tea with the sleeping pills dissolved in it."

"A sad way to die," Jeff said.

"True, and very effective," his mother responded. She sighed. "The note was printed on the printer they use jointly. They didn't have a printer of their own, so for personal things they used the one the library rents. Sure enough, they both used it last week and the print wheel on it today is the same one used for the note. They both seem to have been working on private projects. Edna was doing an autobiography, it seems. Gladys did typing for several local authors plus her old company."

"You probably already checked the diskettes the word processor writes the documents on, right?" asked Jeff.

"Right," she said. "No note. Apparently you can delete the document as soon as you're through with it."

"Yeah, you usually do, too. Gives you more room on the diskette."

"Edna had three chapters of her autobiography and an outline and that was it. We checked Gladys's diskette, too. Just the things she was working on for other people."

"Yeah," Sandy munched thoughtfully, "but if Edna did type that note and didn't type anything else, it will still be on there."

"We looked at the indexes already. No note."

"No, Mrs. McCoy," Sandy said patiently, "when you tell your word processor to delete your document, it doesn't really delete the document. It just deletes certain pointers and tells the system it can write over that space. So if she didn't type anything else, then the note is still there, somewhere on that disk. A real techy can find it. Anyway, that's the way the ones at school work."

Margaret stared at her. "Do businesses know this?" she asked. "Governments who use these things, do they know their documents aren't deleted?"

"Sure they know, Mom," Jeff said. "That's why the computer companies had to come up with another program that wipes the document off the disk. But most people don't buy that feature. It's usually called Total Erase or Security-Something-or-Other."

"At school it's called Disk

Erase," Sandy said uneasily. "And it works, too."

Margaret was already on the phone.

Two nights later Mike took them out to dinner.

"It was there, all right," Margaret said, repeating for Mike and Sandy's benefit what she had already told the boys. "On Gladys's diskette. She felt it would be unseemly to do any work before the funeral," she said dryly. "It took them a while to find it among everything else, but there it was. And once she was confronted with that, she fell apart and confessed to putting the pills in her sister's tea."

"But why did she do it?" Sandy asked, wide-eyed.

"Jealousy," Margaret said softly. "Envy, that age-old curse. It seemed to Gladys that her sister had always been able to get whatever she wanted, always. Gladys had all the qualifications, Edna got the great jobs, the nice men. And now she was going to marry, and leave Gladys bitter and lonely again."

"Well, Gladys could have had it all, too, if she hadn't been so scared of everything, couldn't she?" asked Jeff.

"I suppose," his mother said.

"I mean, when you look at it," continued Jeff, ever belaboring a point, "what was it that her sister had that Gladys didn't have?"

Margaret fiddled with her napkin. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Mike watching her.

"Right," Sandy said. "From the pictures in the paper she wasn't any prettier and she wasn't the one with all the scholarly honors and they were raised in the same home and all, so what was it do you think that the other sister had that Gladys didn't?"

Margaret was silent, studying her napkin.

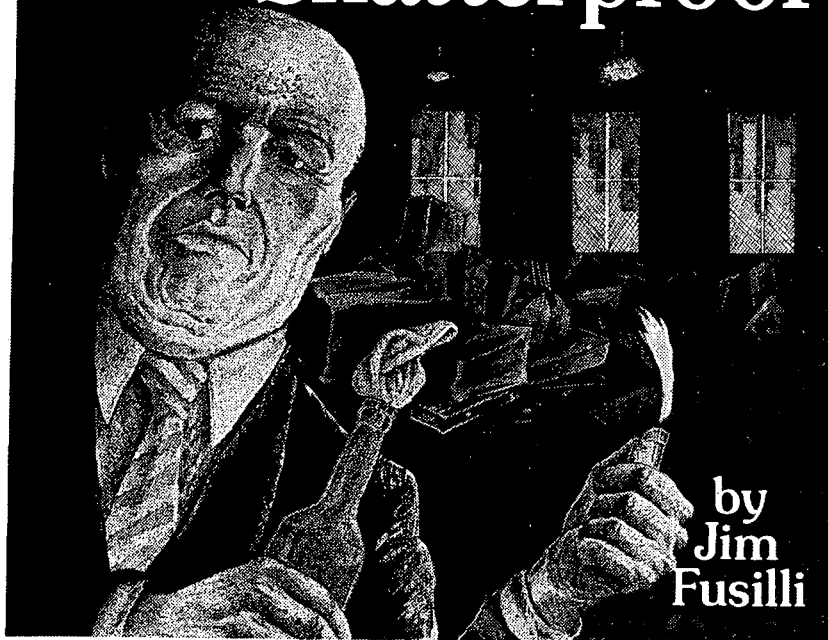
"Mom," Brian began, "what do you . . ."

"Courage," Margaret said grimly. "I guess it was courage."

Why were they all smiling at her in such a silly way?

FICTION

Shatterproof



John Frolic pounds his desk, stands and swears, and his voice rips the night's stillness. In her office, separated from her partner's by a wafer-thin wall, Sheila closes her eyes, puts down her pencil, and readies for another argument.

"What is it this time, John?" She moves down the dark corridor and stands in the door frame, left hand on her hip, yellow legal pad in her right.

Frolic sits in shadows. A small

lamp, not unlike the kind used by diamond cutters, shines on a stack of papers on his sprawling wood desk. Sheila knows he can't read a balance sheet without the harsh spot, even with his heavy bifocals. Across the small room, the Empire State Building, its top red and green for the holiday season, dominates the window above the credenza.

"Sheila, I am not tired," he begins. "It is nine thirty. I've been here since ten o'clock this

morning. For lunch, I had a chicken salad sandwich. Took me ten minutes to find a piece of chicken. No dinner yet, neither. But I am not tired."

Sheila, redheaded, forty-six years old, looking maybe fifteen years younger, enters and sits on Frolic's leather sofa. He looks at her long legs. After twenty-two years, she is no longer embarrassed; with her, he is a harmless lech.

"I envy you, John," she says. "I'm ready to fall out right here."

"See? You agree with me. Here, we are wasting our time." John, after forty years near the fur district, likes to affect the patois of his Jewish neighbors to cosy up to an unpleasant subject:

"Oh, John, please not again. We are not wasting our time." She nods at the spreadsheet on his desk. "Kepler Glass is a profitable business. Maybe not as profitable as—"

"As ten years ago, five years ago, last year," he barks.

"Rough times," she says sadly.

In 1980, they employed two hundred and twenty people. This year the entire staff Christmas and Hanukkah card list amounted to eighty-five. Rough indeed: their decorative glass operation, to quote accountant Rosenburg's memorable 1981 assessment, "kaput"; tableware

shut down for almost a dozen years now; lens systems for digital computers beyond their imagination, as was photochromic glass. Commercial glass orders, from his friends in construction in New Jersey and Connecticut, kept them alive. But for how long?

"We barely made it through the holidays, Sheila."

"I know," she says. "But—"

"There are no 'buts' this time," he interrupts. "I'm going to sell. If I can't sell I'm going to close. That's final."

Sell? Who would buy?

"And, for once, don't try to talk me out of it," he adds. Round fingers tucked into his vest pocket, he paces behind his desk, moving in and out of darkness. So quickly, Sheila thought, so quickly he moves from the charming businessman to bitter ogre. How many times had she watched him do business with a smile over lunch with clients only to have to listen to his red-faced ranting in the back of a cab on the way uptown?

"You will be putting eighty-five people out of work." No, eighty-six, she amends. Kepler Glass has been the centerpiece of her adult life, the only place she's ever worked, starting as a secretary and, through hard, hard work, a sliver of savvy, and sixty-six hundred dollars of

the money her father left, becoming Frolic's partner on his fifty-fifth birthday four years ago. Remember that, John? Happy birthday, said the repo man, you owe seven thousand on the used tank furnace. You can't repossess a furnace, John sneered. "Oh, no? Watch." After much pleading and cajoling, she agreed to his offer of a partnership; John begrudgingly threw in four hundred, and the plant was saved.

"That isn't my problem," he says and scratches the nape of his neck where his toupee meets his thinning hair. "I am not their keeper. I am the owner. The business fails, the business closes. Simple." He dusts his hands together.

"John, listen to me. If we reopen tableware—"

"Sheila, don't start in with that again."

"Look at the numbers."

He pounds the stack of papers; the bellow startles her and he seizes the silence. "Don't tell me to look at numbers. The numbers don't tell what's in here." He violently taps his chest with his fingers. A hollow thud sounds.

His heart. He always invokes his heart, she thinks. But, for the past few years, she had begun to doubt whether he still had one. When a shipment of soda ash out of Richmond, Vir-

ginia, was delayed because a bank wouldn't guarantee Kepler's credit, he fired dead on the spot the shipping foreman, Mike Mallory, an old ex-con who had been a reliable staffer for eight years. Only last week John's secretary, a nineteen-year-old cherub fresh out of vocational school, quit in tears after one too many of his spewing tirades, as had two others before her. Employee morale among the largely immigrant warehouse staff was in ruins; a moratorium on salary increases saw to that. Yet John continued to pull up to the loading dock in his new, obscenely luxurious Cadillac as the plant workers poured in from the dreadful Eighth Avenue subway station.

"We are finished," he spits. "I'll call Goldstein after the first of the year."

"John, you cannot sell without my approval."

He laughs. "Don't give me that. I don't need your approval and you know it. You hold a minority position." He drops into his high-backed chair. "This company belongs to Agnes and me."

At Goldstein's urging, Frolic, to shield himself from liability, put forty-five percent of his holdings in his wife's name when he signed over forty-five percent to his new partner. But

Frolic claimed he held his wife's proxy and that plus his ten percent gave him majority interest in the firm.

"My father's money kept Kepler Glass alive," she says.

He looks at the dusty portrait of Max Kepler on the wall above the sofa. "Fathers," he says. "Everything I have I owe to fathers. To yours, to Agnes's." He laughs; it is smug, satirical. "Baloney. This company would have died ten years ago if I ran it like old man Kepler, that feeble bastard."

Max Kepler, an inventor, was not a businessman, Sheila remembers. He wasn't much of an inventor, either; he played a small role in the development of aluminosilicate glass and contributed his thinking on glass ceramics to the aerospace industry but, other than that, almost nothing. However, he did build a successful company to support his efforts and won the respect of his peers and his employees, a rare feat. Frolic managed neither.

"And your money, Sheila, gets you more than you deserve."

"John," she says, containing her anger. "I made more as chief accountant than I do now."

"Nobody begged you for your money, sweetheart."

No? "Look, I'm tired and I'm hungry. You want to call Goldstein, go ahead and call him." He smiles; condescension spills

across the desk. "But I will do everything I can to keep you from closing Kepler Glass."

"What can you do?" he laughs. "What, Miss Sheila? What are you going to do?"

We'll see, she thinks. We'll see.

Agnes Kepler Frolic looks in the mirror and sees a sad old sack of a woman, sixty-three going on ninety-three, withered from the top of her forehead to the heels of her pinching shoes. One hundred brush strokes through her silver hair in the morning, another hundred at night. With each she moans, "I hate you, John. I hate you, John."

This house is big, yes, and it is comfortable. But it is your house, John. My father's house, nestled away in the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, had a workbench and sawdust and scattered blueprints and silica flakes, the smell of soda-lime and a Bunsen burner. In your house, I see Naugahyde and cable TV, a wet bar, Gucci loafers, a VIP card from a casino in Atlantic City, ridiculous dice-shaped cufflinks.

Would it be too much to go for a walk in the woods, John? You took me to the forest, red, sienna, and crystal under the golden sky, when you first went to work for my father's com-

pany. Was it so horrible, John, that you could only marry me? That you couldn't love me? Eighty-nine, ninety, ninety-one. I hate you, John. You made me grow old. You took my pride and my youth. You stole my laughter.

She looks at her pale reflection in the dressing room mirror. Where are you tonight, John? Ninety-two, ninety-three, ninety-four. Not that I care, John, even if you are in a cheap hotel with another of your paid lovers. I'd just like to know, John, where are you? I would consider it an act of kindness, almost an act of love, if just once you told me where you are, where you will be.

Ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven. The white Princess phone on the vanity rings. It is so quiet, so still in this huge, soulless house, the little bell echoes.

"Hello?"

"Agnes? This is Sheila Anders."

"Yes, Sheila, how are you?"

"Oh, I'm not sure, Agnes," she says in near despair, "I think I need your help."

A smile creases her wrinkled face. Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred. "Go on, dear."

Goldstein is calm, studied. He sits on the leather sofa, not far from where Sheila sat last month when John told her Kepler Glass was dead.

"What about the equipment? There's got to be somebody out there who needs—"

"Come on, John, you think maybe Corning Glass is going to come into Manhattan begging to buy second-hand equipment?"

John looks at the ceiling. "Third-hand."

"All right, third-hand," Goldstein says. "So you're faced with two possibilities: You can close down and get out of the business or you can file under Chapter 11, cut your losses, and probably continue."

"No. No bankruptcy." He takes his feet from the desk and stares at the blotter. Wouldn't Agnes love that. He could hear her shrill voice, ringing from her bedroom across the hall to his. My father never had to declare bankruptcy, she'd yell. You're so smart and he was so dumb, but it's you who failed. Locking the door kept her out, but he'd yet to find how to silence her bone-chilling voice.

Goldstein fidgets on the sofa. "You're in a fix, buddy. Maybe you ought to follow Sheila's advice and start up the tableware operation again."

"That's great, Artie. Real solid business thinking." He taps the

"Nobody's going to want to buy this place, John. You know that."

side of his head with his gold Cross pen. "You ever hear of throwing good money after bad? That's what I'd be doing if I open tableware again."

"Why don't you let Sheila buy you out? I can arrange suitable financial arrangements—"

"Hey, you representing her or me? I don't want to hear her name one more time. Sheila, Sheila. Sheila this, Sheila that. You love her so much, Artie, why don't you marry her?"

"She wouldn't have me and you know it."

John sips his drink; ice rattles around the thick glass. "You know what I ought to do?"

"What?"

Another sip. "Nothing. Forget it," he replies. But in his mind he thinks, I ought to burn this place down.

Artie picks up his glass from John's desk. "Anyway, you let me know what you want to do. Mazel tov, kid."

"Yeah, yeah, Happy New Year to you, too," he says and taps Artie's glass with his. I am standing in front of you, Goldstein, but I am one thousand miles away.

"Sheila, I hope you don't think it odd of me to bring you all the way up here."

Sheila leans over to kiss

Agnes on the cheek. "No, not at all," she says politely. It's fifteen degrees and Agnes selects the Watchung Reservation up in the Ramapo Mountains, forty miles outside of Manhattan, as their five P.M. meeting place. Of course it's odd, Agnes; most of what you do is odd. She runs her tongue over her soft lips to remove the cheap rouge.

Fresh snow covers the quiet cedar trees, and pine cones dot the white wilderness. Agnes turns up the heat in her car. Sheila blows on her cold hands. A chill that starts in her ankles vibrates to her shoulders as warm dry air brushes her legs.

"So he's going to sell," Agnes says flatly, impassively. Sheila nods. "I didn't think he could without my approval."

"He says he holds your power of attorney."

"I don't know what that means."

"It means he doesn't need you to approve the sale. He'll use your forty-five percent along with his ten and have the majority interest. It's in the terms he drew up when I gave him my money. I should have—"

Agnes turns from her and looks ahead at the sun's last glowing arch beyond the white crest.

"He's already talked to Goldstein," Sheila adds.

"Can't you talk him out of it?"

"I've tried."

Agnes, exasperated, says, "I wonder what my father would do?"

Nothing, Sheila thinks. He'd be as baffled as we are. Any time you took him from his workshop, his toys, he was baffled. Unless he was ready to demonstrate his latest invention. Then Max Kepler became an eleven-year-old boy, the bubbling joy on his face identical to what it was on a Christmas morning back in Mecklenburg. So many times he'd bounce into John's office with an armload of blueprints or a crazy-quilt stack of calculations. "John, wait until you see what I have here," he'd say.

"Mr. Kepler," John would reply, patronizing him, mocking him, "glassmaking hasn't changed in six thousand years, but you're going to tell me it will change today."

"Remember when your father tried to come up with that cleansing solution that wouldn't damage glass?"

Agnes laughs gently, quietly. Kepler knew industry preferred a hydrofluoric acid solution to clean brass and copper fixtures but was reluctant to use it on building ornaments near windows because it could weaken glass. Unaware that an extremely mild solution for such work already existed, Max set

out to make one; it took him four months to exactly duplicate what was already sold in supply stores.

"He should have checked with the Patent Office," Agnes says with another laugh. It was easy to make fun of that flop; using her father's formula, Kepler Glass never again spent a dime on hydrofluoric-acid-based commercial cleaning solvents.

Both women, without a word, think of another of Max's off-beat ideas, but this time neither one laughs. Kepler proposed shatterproof glass as safety plate glass for shop windows. He knew that people who had accidents with glass were more likely to be injured by piercing jagged shards than the impact. A thirteen-year-old girl had lost her right eye in such a bloody incident at a jewelry shop not far from the Kepler plant. But shatterproof windows—a thin sheet of adhesive plastic sandwiched between two thin layers of glass—when damaged broke into tiny pieces so small they were virtually unable to cause serious injury.

John, by now Max's son-in-law and a full partner in Kepler Glass, cared little for safety but at first thought Max, finally, might have something. Not every shopkeeper could afford costly alarm systems, he reasoned. Kepler could offer shat-

terproof glass as a security device—the simple logic that two windows are harder to break than one would dazzle these greenhorns. And what did they know from shatterproof glass. He could tell them it cost fifty dollars more a standard frame than regular window glass and they'd believe him.

One hot July afternoon Max set up a five foot high sheet of his shatterproof glass, taut in a narrow steel frame, and, to mimic a jewelry store display, put his own erratic wristwatch behind it. John, Sheila, and twenty other staff members, many of whom had witnessed earlier failures, reluctantly gathered. Max, on short bowed legs, sweat-stain rings around the underarms of his royal blue shirt, practically trotted around the room to make sure everyone could see.

He then raised his calloused hand and, with an audible grunt, punched the glass sheet. To everyone's surprise, nothing happened; the glass didn't crack. He picked up a hardback book and flung it against the window. A slight wobble, yes, but no break. Max was delighted, as was the relieved staff. Led by Sheila, they broke into good-natured applause.

Placid, unimpressed, John stepped around the group and placed two black suction cups

joined by a single steel handle against the sheet. From his suit jacket side pocket, he removed a dual-edged glass cutter and, with four short, precise lines, sliced through both layers of glass and the plastic adhesive. It took him two minutes to undo Max's dream.

Max took the tool and examined it. It had never occurred to him that such a device, with a long, beveled blade to work against the inner sheet as the diamond-hard blade slit the outside, could exist. Bewildered, he dropped the weapon.

"They sell 'em in hardware stores," John taunted as the staff drifted away in embarrassment. "Well, it's back to the drawing board, ain't it?" The sting of his son-in-law's remarks cut Max as deftly as the blade would have. He had badly misjudged him, this once-sweet boy he had nurtured. Surely he now knew John had played him perfectly and had stolen both his prizes, his daughter and his company.

"But it is safe maybe," Max said to no one. To finish the humiliation, John flicked the sheet with the back of his hand above the box he'd cut and the glass broke into five hundred tiny pieces. "Not much for safety, neither," John cracked, as several small slivers hung from his bleeding knuckles.

"Your father was a fine man, Agnes."

"Why did he let John do it?" she replies. "Why did he let him take over the company?"

Their breath had steamed the windshield, and the falling evening made it hard to find the twinkling stars. "I think he did it for you, Agnes. I think he did it because he loved you." The comment was improbable; everyone knew John and Artie had tricked Max into signing over Kepler Glass. But Sheila said it gently and could see her subtle prompting was working.

Mike Mallory stands in the shadows near the Kepler loading dock and throws lit matchsticks into the street. Less than a mile from Times Square, West 28th Street, lined with teeming gray warehouses, is a ghost town. Funny, Marty thinks, for eight years I couldn't walk down this street without bumping into some chump. Now I am all alone in this cold, starless night. Wild, ain't it?

He looks at his cheap watch, then holds it against his ear. She said ten o'clock. It was ten fifteen and still no sign of her. Where the hell is she?

Puffs of steam come from his nose and mouth as he leans against the brick wall and waits. A Checker blows down the block,

bumping hard on a manhole cover, sending the passenger in back against the roof. The cabbie laughs; Marty thinks maybe he hits that spot for the hell of it. Every night he zips down the block and sends a passenger sprawling across the back of his hack.

Soon the cab is a faded memory and the last of the matches goes flying onto the frozen concrete. Marty digs his hands deep into the pockets of his short brown corduroy coat. Imagine getting canned after eight years, then a year later getting a call like that. Why would he want to see me after all this time? Maybe he wants to apologize. In the joint, you'd hassle a guy and a few weeks later, when he finally found out how much damage you could do to him, he'd send his chicken over to make peace. That's when you knew you had him. That's when you turned up the gas and really burned him. In a crazy way, he admired Frolic for cutting him so hard and so cold. Now he wants to apologize. Too bad.

The rusty traffic light at the corner changes to green with a click but no cars, not even screaming taxis, come toward him. I wonder who his new secretary is? Nice, smooth voice. Real nice. Probably looks real nice, too.

For no reason, Marty begins to whistle, of all dumb things, "Melancholy Baby."

I don't think I've been on these stairs since old man Kepler died, Sheila thinks, and I know I've never been on them at ten thirty at night. Though a naked bulb lights each landing, the steps are black, and the wind from below blows through with a moaning whistle. Moving slowly, she stumbles but recovers before her knee hits the ground.

Noise isn't a problem—the reinforced concrete forms a virtual tomb—silence is. Sheila scrapes her flats against the sandy stairs and taps her rings against the steel handrail, deliberately making enough sound to frighten curious rats, like the one she saw gnawing on an empty Styrofoam coffee cup in the alley. Thus far the only rat she'd run into, on the fifth floor, was long dead.

Short of breath, hot and damp under winter clothes, she finally reaches the eighth floor. Scores of cigarette butts, from production and shipping employees sneaking out for unscheduled breaks from the danger and stench of flammable liquids and noxious acids, litter the landing. Kicking through the debris, she finds the dented knob and carefully

pulls back the heavy steel-reinforced door. Its grunting squeal rattles down and around the empty stairwell.

Inside, the warehouse is in shadows; it, too, is lit only by naked bulbs, but its concrete floor is clear and reflects the dim light. Pallets packed with crushed boxes fill the center of the room. Packing crates are stacked against the walls. The street lamps outside send a dull glow up through the windows. In the distance, she sees the Empire State Building, back to its usual white light, a vigilant beacon in the harsh, moonless winter night.

Bending so low she's hidden by the pallet loads, Sheila creeps softly toward the front stairwell that leads from the eighth floor to the narrow corridor between the partners' offices. Shadows cut across the wall and floors, making the dark darker, giving strange shapes to normally routine objects. Her blouse clings to her long, moist spine. She stops to steady herself; sweat slips from her red bangs and kisses her dry lips. She takes in a deep breath, lets it out and sees the stream flow from within her. Composed, as composed as a murderess can be, she heads for the back door.

As she moves within ten feet of it, it swings open with a startling burst and bangs loudly

against the wall. Quickly, she darts behind a packing crate, under a reaching shadow. Oh God, he saw me, she thinks. Or did he? Just in case, she dips her right hand in her jacket pocket.

“Where the hell am I?” John says aloud to no one. The door swings behind him and slams shut, though with less fury than it had when it chipped the wall seconds earlier.

This better work, he thinks. In his left hand there's a Colt .45 malt liquor bottle filled halfway with hi-test gasoline he'd siphoned from his Caddy. In his right he holds the Bic lighter he tested twenty times in his office before he headed down the stairs.

He turns to his right, toward the mild fumes, to the caged room where flammable liquids are stored each evening in special containers. Squinting—his glasses lay on the *Hustler* magazine he left on his desk—he sees a calendar with an illustration of Jesus and the Sacred Heart crudely taped against the wall. Superstitious idiots, he thinks. I should worry about them? I'll be glad to get rid of them. He laughs to himself; one of them will probably be blamed for this.

Oh, the genius of this. Not once did I do anything out of my usual routine, except to establish one hell of an alibi. He reviews his evening: Put the Caddy in a garage on 63rd Street near the Odeon Cineplex, buy a ticket at the theater, and sneak away. With his fingers wrapped around the lighter, he runs his hand along his pants pocket and feels the ticket stub near his keys.

Switching the bottle to his other hand, he dips into his overcoat pocket and pulls out a rag. He dabs gasoline on it, twirls it around his finger, and jabs it into the bottle neck, stuffing it until it almost touches the liquid. Positioning the Bic, he reviews the procedure: Flick the lighter, touch it to the rag, throw the bottle near the cage, watch the flaming gas stream flow toward the chemicals, run the hell out the back door, and head toward Times Square. From there, take the subway to 63rd and get back to the garage by the time the movie lets out.

He wipes his forehead with the coat sleeve. The lighter clicks and an orange and blue flame seems to shoot from his thumb. Carefully, he brings the flame to the rag. It catches instantly. Turning slightly, he faces the cage and cocks the bottle behind his ear.

“John,” Sheila says. Her soft

voice hits him with the force of a clarion's blare. He turns but before he can reply she slashes at him with an awkward motion, her long arm swiftly moving from right to left across his throat. He feels a cold breeze past his neck, then, oddly, without reason, feels a moist warmth spreading across his chest.

He tries to speak but his voice is gone; a grotesque gurgle comes out instead. Dropping the lighter, he grabs at his carotid artery and jugular vein with his empty hand and feels the wound, deep, open, separating, pouring blood like water from a broken valve. Weak-kneed, dizzy, he falls backward, banging his head hard against the slippery, bloodstained floor. The gas-filled bottle drops near him. Sheila, seeing the flash, turns and bolts toward the back door.

Seconds later, a small crack in the night is followed by an enormous explosion as the short blast from the Molotov ignites the caged room. In an instant, John's body is devoured by burning flames. So is the eighth floor warehouse.

Mike Mallory jumps at the sound of the shattering explosion. His heart pounding in triple time, he looks up, then quickly bends to cover his head as glass and brick, mortar and frame shower him.

Instinctively, he turns toward the building but realizes the futility. There's nobody in a warehouse at ten thirty; besides, if there was, there's nothing I could do about it now. Bright orange flames, strewn with black fingers as chemicals burn, burst from the gaping hole in the building. Mike silently counts the stories. Eight; too bad it wasn't Frolic's office on nine. Maybe the old bastard might've been in there with one of his crosseyed hookers and gotten his butt roasted.

Mike's eyes begin to burn. In the distance, fire engines wail and push closer. A golden, billowing fire may be beautiful to watch, he thinks, but I'd better get the hell out of here. He begins an awkward trot, a formless jog, away from the furnace. A blue and white police car careens the wrong way up the block, red lights flashing, siren blasting, and cuts him off. A young cop, leather jacket wide open, tie flapping, jumps from the passenger side and pulls his .357 service revolver. "Right there," he shouts. "On the ground. Now."

"You're kidding," Mike says. The cop looks like he's twelve years old.

"Mister, I believe I can part your hair from here with this baby," he says, his voice steady. "I suggest you hit the ground real soon or I'll get my chance."

Monsignor Merrill, the last of the evening's mourners, gently lets himself out the front door. Agnes Kepler Frolic, widow, says a quiet goodnight, clumsily kicks her shoes into the hall closet, and enters the oversized living room. Sheila Anders sits on the rose love-seat, her hands demurely folded in the lap of her black dress. What a nice girl, thinks Agnes, taking the trouble to start a fire.

Wood crackles and sends a warm glow across to the peach club chair where Agnes sits. "Well," she says softly.

"Well," Sheila replies. "It was a lovely ceremony, Agnes." Though, she thinks, it's funny how people will stay away from the funeral mass of a man who tried to incinerate his own company.

"What happened to Malloy?"

"Mallory," Sheila corrects. "He's been released. Lack of evidence."

"As you said he would. That was a good idea, Sheila."

Gave me a chance to slip away, she thought. If only I hadn't tripped on that rat carcass, I would've been gone before the fire engines arrived. She involuntarily rubs her twisted left ankle. "The police said he claimed a young woman with a sexy voice told him to meet John."

Agnes smiles. "I don't think I've ever been told I have a sexy voice before."

She stands and walks to the liquor cabinet. "Sherry?" And, when Sheila declines, "I hope you don't mind if I—"

"Of course not," Sheila says with a wave.

"You know what I was thinking," Agnes says and sips. "I was thinking how ironic it would be if it was my father's cleaning solution that caught fire and exploded."

Yes, Sheila thinks. Christ, she's actually pleased that John is dead. For Sheila it was something unpleasant that had to be done, but for Agnes it was an act of joy. Sheila looks at her quaintly tasting her sherry, and sees satisfaction.

"Did you use it?" Agnes asks.

For a moment, Sheila is confused. "The solution," Agnes adds.

"Oh, yes," she replies. "It's very good for removing blood." Sheila had soaked the murder weapon in it as soon as she returned home. As the solution bubbled in her sink, Sheila paced her worn hardwood floors and, ears ringing, repeated maybe a hundred times, thank God for reinforced concrete.

"The company belongs to a Kepler again."

"That's true, Agnes. You now hold a majority interest in Kepler Glass."

"Fifty-five percent," she says.

They sit still as the older woman finishes her drink. A spitting chip from a burning log in the stately fireplace occasionally cuts the silence. Odd that she should claim the company as hers, Sheila thinks as her face warms in the fluttering glow.

"I have a lot of plans, Sheila."

You do? "Oh?"

"Yes," she says. "As soon as Arthur prepares the proper papers, I'll assume my father's role as president."

Arthur? "Don't you think that's the way Father would have wanted it?"

Sheila smiles and runs her hands along the line of her dark skirt. "Don't you think it best that I run the company for a while, Agnes? It may arouse suspicion if you jump in and appear eager to make changes."

"Arouse suspicion? I don't understand. The police know where I was. I was here, in bed, almost asleep, without means to get to or from New York."

"Your car—"

"In a garage. I believe it needed an engine tune-up. Besides, I called Arthur's answering service at nine fifty. He called me here ten minutes later."

The heat from the fire begins to sting Sheila's cheek. Agnes stands to pour herself another drink. "Did you bring it?" she asks.

It: the dual-edged glass cutter John had used to shatter Max's shatterproof dream. First Max, then Agnes, had kept it all these years. How easily it thoroughly slashed across and through John's throat, effortlessly tearing skin and cartilage. There had been fear an autopsy would have revealed the unique cut but now . . .

"I thought I told you I wanted it back," Agnes says. "Did you bring it?"

"No," Sheila says with a shy, thoughtful smile. "I think I'd better hang on to it for a while." She stands and, with long careful steps, walks away from the heat and thinks, you never know. I might need it again.

THE MYSTERIOUS PHOTOGRAPH



Arthur Tress

Clearly not a fly-by-night operation. We will give a prize of \$25 to the person who invents the best mystery story (in 250 words or less—and be sure to include a crime, please), based on the above photograph. The story will be printed in a future issue. Reply to Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

The winning entry for the December Mysterious Photograph will be found on page 155.

FICTION

An Apple for the Teacher

by Stephen Wasylyk

Thin body almost lost in his heavy woolen jacket, knitted hat pulled down over his ears, and his jaw bulldog stubborn, the boy looked up, unintimidated by Sergeant Korowski's six and a half feet,

two hundred and twenty-five pounds of blue-clad bulk looming over the waist-high desk.

On his way to his office, Beckett paused. This could be as interesting as the battle he had just left between the mayor and

Captain Tolley over the so-called inefficiency of the police department.

Korowski pointed at the door.

"Please go home, kid. I've explained it all once and I'm not going through it again. If you don't go, I'll call your parents—"

"They're dead. I live with my grandmother."

"Then I'll call and have her come and get you."

"Her arthritis won't let her leave the house in cold weather."

Beckett grinned. The kid was holding his own.

"Don't be a smartass, kid," said Korowski.

"I'm not," said the boy. "I just want to talk to a detective."

Beckett caught Korowski's eye and motioned the desk sergeant to him.

"What's it all about?"

"He says he wants to report a murder, a woman named Cynthia Whiting. The kid has to have a few vacant rooms on the top floor, Hoke, because she died from a heart attack last Saturday, alone in her house over on Water Street. Archer and Carvaggio handled the call along with the paramedics. She was unconscious when they got there and died before they could do anything. No way it could be murder. She had a history of heart trouble and the M.E.'s report confirms the cause of death."

"Did he say who he thought murdered her?"

"Her husband, Avery, but he was at the country club. One of her friends called to check on her and didn't get an answer. Instant panic. They called us while the husband was driving in. He arrived just in time to keep the boys from breaking down the door."

"Get the file. I'll talk to him."

"Hell, we're too jammed up with those burglaries to waste time on a quirky kid. Let me take him outside and throw him into the nearest snow-bank."

"And get brought up on a charge of police brutality?"

Korowski looked at the boy. "It would be worth it. Why isn't he out throwing snowballs at cars like a normal delinquent?"

"Just get the file, Korowski."

Beckett beckoned the boy to him. "What's your name?"

"Mark Forman."

"Mine is Beckett. You wanted to see a detective. I'm your man." He clamped the file Korowski handed him under his elbow. "Let's go to my office."

The boy pulled his hat off as Beckett led him down the hall, dark brown hair that should have been trimmed three months ago projecting in unruly spikes.

Spocker's eyes questioned Beckett as they passed through

the squad room. Beckett beckoned the heavy-set sergeant to follow.

The boy looked out at Beckett's three-man day shift.

"You're the boss?"

"I'm the boss," said Beckett. "This is Sergeant Spocker. Please sit down."

He flipped through the file, found nothing more than Kowrowski had already told him, and handed the folder to Spocker.

"Was Mrs. Whiting a relative of yours, Mark?"

The boy shook his head. "I was studying piano with her."

Studying piano. Damn. He'd been trying to keep Toni Ewing out of his mind but the boy had put the image of the former concert pianist's wavy hair and laughing blue eyes there again, as though she was still in Meridian instead of off to New York with Crystal Carpenter so the retired diva could fulfill her contract as a commentator on the opera.

"Studying piano, not taking lessons?"

The boy's eyes shifted, his throat muscles working as he swallowed hard.

"Mrs. Whiting didn't take beginners, only advanced students."

Advanced student. At his age, that meant he was loaded with talent. Beckett wished Toni was

around to talk to him as one musician to another.

The boy's eyes glistened. He could try but he couldn't completely control the tears.

"Mrs. Whiting was more than just a teacher," Beckett said softly. "Am I right?"

The boy swallowed hard again.

Beckett selected his words carefully.

"I want you to consider this. Maybe your liking her so much has something to do with thinking she was murdered. Maybe you need to blame someone for taking her away. It wouldn't be unusual to feel that way."

The boy shook his head. "He said he'd kill her and he did."

Spocker cleared his throat. "Tell us about it."

"Mr. Whiting never came into the studio while a student was there. Never. But he did two weeks ago, I guess because he was so mad. He began to yell at her, something about money in his checking account. The two of them went into another room but the door was a little open so I went over to listen because I was afraid he would hit her or something. I heard her say she would call the bank about his checking account, that it had to be a mistake. He told her she damned well better get it straightened out. And then he said, kind of soft and low, like

he really meant it, 'I'm tired of this, Cynthia, I'm going to kill you.' She said, 'If you're that tired of me, there is nothing to keep you from leaving.' And he said, 'You know I won't walk out without the money. I earned it, I'm entitled to it, and I'm damned sick of waiting for you to die to get it.' Then he said it again. 'I'm going to kill you.' "

Beckett studied the boy. He was intelligent enough and imaginative enough to have made it up and rehearsed it mentally until he believed it.

"Was anyone else in the house at the time?" asked Spocker.

"Mrs. Dreshler, the housekeeper."

"Could she have heard him?"

The boy's shoulders lifted.

"You have a very good memory."

"I remember almost everything I hear. My grandmother says I'd better start learning how to forget because by the time I'm grown, there won't be any more room in my head."

Beckett grinned. "Did you tell her what you heard?"

"No. I wasn't going to tell anyone ever but I thought that Mrs. Whiting would want me to, so I came here." He looked at the floor. "I knew no one would believe me."

"Sergeant Korowski explained how she died?"

"That's what her husband

would want, isn't it? Everyone to think she had a heart attack?"

"Possibly, if he killed her. I'll make a deal with you. As a citizen, you've lodged a complaint and I'm obligated to look into it. I will. But it looks to me that since he was at the country club when she died, he got what he wanted without lifting a finger."

The jaw thrust forward again in the bulldog look. "I don't know how, but he killed her."

"Maybe, but you're old enough to realize that many people threaten to kill each other every day in the week, but fortunately for us, few ever get around to it. You've told us what you heard and what you think. Don't tell anyone else. Just go about your business until I get back to you, and when I do, if I tell you Avery Whiting had nothing to do with the death of his wife, no arguments. Okay?"

The boy kneaded his knitted cap. "I guess so."

Beckett pushed a sheet of paper and pencil across the desk.

"Let me have your name, address, and phone number."

The boy wrote carefully and awkwardly, trying to make each letter perfect and not succeeding.

"If we find you're right, you might have to make a state-

ment and sign it. And appear in court to testify as to what you heard. If that should happen, it won't be pleasant for you. You might even wish you never said a word to anyone. Still want me to go ahead?"

The jaw took on the bulldog look again.

"My grandmother says we do what we have to do."

"True enough. Mind if I ask what happened to your parents?"

"They were killed in a plane crash when I was five."

"I'm sorry." Beckett glanced at the address, two miles away and in a section not served by a bus route. A thermometer barely touching ten, a stiff northwest wind, and the certainty he'd be ridiculed gave the boy three good reasons to stay home, yet he was here.

He rose and held out his hand. "Thank you for coming in, Mark. Sergeant Spocker will have someone drive you home. Your grandmother will be worried because you're late. What will you tell her?"

The boy was suddenly very young and vulnerable, his voice wistful. "Would it be all right to say I was with a friend?"

Beckett squeezed his shoulder gently. "You couldn't get closer to the truth."

Spocker returned after turn-

ing him over to Crawford.

"Are you really going to follow through on this, Hoke?"

"Does the name Cyrus Tamerlane mean anything to you?"

"Sure. He made a bundle developing real estate around here in the fifties. His son Charlie tried to play double or nothing with the banks and lost it all when interest rates went sky high, which is the reason people say he was drunker than a conventioneer the night he killed himself and his wife by wrapping his Cadillac around a tree. What does it have to do with this?"

"Cynthia Whiting was Charlie Tamerlane's daughter. His going broke didn't affect her because her grandfather established a trust fund for her when she was a little girl. She wasn't teaching music because she had to. She was doing it because she had a great deal of talent, loved music, and because her heart wouldn't allow her to do much else."

Spocker grinned. "I suppose if I traveled in social circles where the mutual attraction was music, I'd know that, too. Which brings up Toni. Have you called her since she left?"

He'd tried. Several times. And hung up before completing the call because he knew the conversation would be full of long, awkward pauses. What the hell.

A TERRIFYING NEW MASTERWORK BY

FREDERIK POHL

Terror

Clouded in secrecy and protected from land, sea, and air, Project Vulcan would tap the life-energy of the Earth's core. The doomsday bomb carefully placed at the weakest edge of an underwater volcano off the Hawaiian coast would cover the Earth in a dust cloud that would bring food production to a grinding halt.

Now Vulcan has fallen into the hands of terrorists. And the world watches as they grip the detonator—and make their demands.

"A daring writer...Pohl has always been willing to try something new in his fiction."

—A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction



BERKLEY SCIENCE FICTION \$2.95

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He'd get over her in another year or two.

"That information has nothing to do with what we are discussing."

"Specifically, no. Generally, yes. While Toni was around, you joined the human race, Hoke. You shaved, you wore a tie, you did your work and you went home like the rest of us because you had something in your life other than this office. Look at you now. You've already begun to backslide like a reformed druggie who can't stay clean." Spocker shook his head. "She's the best thing that ever happened to you, Hoke. You're going to fool around until you lose her."

She's already lost, Spocker. "I doubt that I'll come back with Crystal, Beckett. After all, I have no desire to spend my life as her secretary and there is really nothing in music for me here." Her voice had become tender. "Only you, Beckett. You're a song in my heart, but that isn't enough for someone like me. Do you understand?"

He hated to admit it, but he did. Meridian was hardly the music capital of the world and she needed to be with the best.

"And you're going to play Ann Landers until you're back in uniform riding a patrol car. Let's finish this thing. What

thia was doling money out to her husband and he resented it. He could have decided the easiest way to solve the problem was to eliminate her."

"Maybe, but since he was at the club when she died, he'd have to do it by remote control."

Beckett leaned back and looked at the ceiling. "I wonder if that kid is interested in becoming a detective? So far he's the only one to realize that if Avery Whiting killed his wife, he wouldn't stand over her body and brag about it."

Spocker spread his hands. "Okay. We check out the husband, the terms of the will, the medical examiner, the paramedics, her doctor, her lawyer, the housekeeper, and the people at the club that night. And that's only a start. But we're supposed to be working on these burglaries that have everyone, including the mayor, screaming that there's never a cop around when you need one. If His Honor finds that we're looking into a so-called murder on the word of a kid, he'll jump on us with both feet."

Beckett shrugged. "He's been using us as a trampoline for years. I'll take the husband and the housekeeper. You can have the rest."

Spocker grinned. "That's a pretty equal division."

hands gesture. "You heard the kid. I'm the boss. Just move very quietly. If Whiting is guilty, we don't want him alerted. If not, we don't want word to get out that we're investigating him. The gossips will have him convicted in twenty-four hours and some people will never believe anything else."

Spocker nodded. "We'll walk on eggs."

Beckett glanced down at the sergeant's size elevens. "You really know how to worry me, don't you? Let's get together after lunch tomorrow and see if we want to drop it or continue."

He sat looking at the map with the colored pins indicating the burglaries. Ten in the past five weeks, scattered throughout the town and the suburbs in no particular pattern or sequence except that they always occurred on successive nights. Lucrative hauls from wealthy homes, empty because their occupants had fled the bitter cold for warmer climates. Only vague descriptions of possible suspects, all different although the MO was the same. And because the burglaries were widely separated, no way to anticipate when and where the next might be.

His mind took the problem and ran with it, projecting possibilities and looking for an-

swers, and he couldn't help feeling he'd do better if Toni's leaving hadn't left him so empty inside.

Spocker and Hendryx came into his office at one thirty; Spocker spinning the chair around and straddling it, Hendryx half sitting on the wide windowsill, his bulk blocking out most of the gray afternoon light.

"You lucked out," said Spocker. "No burglary last night."

"I didn't expect one," said Beckett. "Let's get on with this. You first, Hendryx."

"I took the people at the club, the medical examiner, and the paramedics along with Archer and Carvaggio. No question Whiting was at the club. What we didn't know was that he's on the board of governors and manages the place just for something to do. He was never out of sight until he ran out at nine thirty. Archer, Carvaggio, and the paramedics arrived at the house at nine forty-five and had just about decided to make a forced entry when Whiting drove up. The woman was lying at the foot of the steps, as though she had started up and hadn't made it. She was still alive but died before they could move her."

"I got most of that from the

report," said Beckett dryly.

Hendryx's eyes widened. "Oh, you want me to play detective? Okay. Carvaggio looked around. There was an open book, face down, beside an easy chair with a pair of reading glasses on top of it, as though she'd set it aside to go up to bed, except that when Carvaggio turned the book over, she'd stopped two pages from the end of a chapter. No one puts a book aside two pages from the end of a chapter."

"Unless they are interrupted," said Beckett.

"It's just a small thing," said Hendryx. "Like the paramedic saying she mumbled something like *man* before he placed the oxygen mask over her face, but he couldn't be sure because he and his partner were talking to each other. She was DOA at the hospital. The medical examiner never went much beyond her heart when he performed the autopsy because he saw no reason to. He said the cause of death was obvious. He did note she had a bad bruise on the back of her skull consistent with tumbling down the stairs and hitting her head."

They sat in silence for a few moments. As Hendryx said, they were small things and meant nothing in themselves.

Spocker cleared his throat.

"Her doctor had the same opinion. She had degenerative

heart disease, and short of a transplant, no one could do anything for her. He did make the point, though, that he didn't expect it to be so sudden. Someone in her condition gradually fails, which she had been doing, until they can't function at all, but because of the heart's weakened condition, high stress or severe shock can cause death at any time."

Another small point, thought Beckett.

"The will had been filed for probate so I looked it up," continued Spocker. "Whiting gets the money, but not in a lump sum. He'll receive the income from a trust fund. I don't think he'll complain. It's more than our three salaries combined."

"If they weren't getting along, why should she leave him anything?" asked Hendryx.

"Same question I asked the lawyer," said Spocker. "He hedged. Said that anything else would have meant a fight in court. I didn't buy that. If she wanted to cut him out, any good attorney could have arranged it. I had the feeling there was something more, but I didn't want to push the issue. Walking out of the office, I remembered the kid had overheard Avery Whiting say he'd earned the money and was entitled to it. That meant one thing to me. Pre-nuptial agreement. If he

had one that said he inherited, she couldn't cut him out."

"And why he wouldn't walk out," said Beckett. "Another twenty years in this job and you'll be very good at it."

Spocker grinned. "Make that ten. I looked up Cyrus's will. If she never married, all she'd ever get from the fund he left was what the administrator thought she should have, but if she did marry, she got it all to do with as she pleased."

"That's a helluva note," said Hendryx.

"Cyrus was from a time when women weren't considered capable of handling a great deal of money, and he probably felt someone could con her out of it," said Beckett. "If she didn't marry, the administrator would see that she had a comfortable income. If she did, taking care of her became the husband's responsibility, not the administrator's. Cyrus should have taken his thinking a step further because he placed her in a very awkward position. If word got out, she'd have every get-rich-quick Romeo in the state proposing and she'd never know if it was for love or her money. Bad enough if she was well, but intolerable for someone in her condition. She'd have felt as though they were ghouls hanging over her grave."

Spocker nodded. "So. I sup-

pose she made a deal with Avery Whiting. She probably liked him, they got along, and she figured, why not? She'd have to support him, but at least she wouldn't have to go to an administrator if she wanted some extra cash."

"Like setting up scholarships at Juilliard or the Curtis Institute of Music for her most talented students," said Beckett.

Spocker glanced at Hendryx. "I told you he didn't go out and get drunk last night. He actually worked."

"And very hard," said Beckett. "I had to buy a very beautiful woman a very expensive dinner to get the information."

"I hope Toni doesn't find out. Who was the woman?"

Beckett leaned back and placed his feet on the desk. "I never reveal my source of information, but she happens to be very knowledgeable about people in the musical circles, such as they are, in the county. Excellent thinking, Spocker. It *was* a marriage of convenience, but if Avery Whiting had known what he was letting himself in for, Cynthia would have needed twice the money for him to marry her. Probably the only people in the world who loved Cynthia were her students. That heart condition made her bitter, and she took her bitterness out on everyone, particularly

Avery, to the point that the lady I was talking to could have killed Cynthia herself, and she's the type who avoids stepping on ants."

"Which gives him even more of a motive than we thought, but settles nothing. If he killed her, we don't know how, have no proof, and aren't likely to find any at this point. We might as well drop it and consider it as one that got away. I don't like it, but I don't think we have a choice."

"I agree," said Hendryx. "The only thing I can think of is to have her body exhumed for a full autopsy, but no judge would issue the order on the suspicions of a boy."

Beckett's eyes were closed.

"You're saying nothing, Hoke," said Spocker.

Beckett opened his eyes. "I can't go to the boy and tell him to forget it without being certain I did everything I could. I had no time last night or this morning to speak to the housekeeper, so I'll do that now and then drive over to the boy's home. Anyone other than the husband mentioned in the will?"

"The boy. Along with several other students, he gets a grant to continue his education."

Beckett swung his feet to the floor. "Let's get back to ordinary business. Last night, I marked a calendar page on the

dates of the burglaries—"

"Last night?" asked Spocker. "You're going back to the original Beckett. When Toni was here you worked regular hours. Where can I get in touch with her?"

Beckett ignored him. "You'll see they took place in pairs after a gap of four days. Suggest anything?"

"Not to me," said Spocker.

"Maybe the guy needs a long rest between jobs," said Hendryx.

"How about someone who works four ten-hour days and has two days off, an arrangement that many businesses use because they must be open seven days a week? The same employees don't always end up working the weekends and it gives everyone one day of overtime. And while you're thinking about that, consider a place where an employee also has the opportunity to learn about houses that will be empty on his days off."

Spocker looked at Hendryx. "Why is he always the one who comes up with these things?"

"Now that Toni is gone, he has nothing else to do."

Spocker shook his head. "If we don't get her back here, we'll never be promoted. As long as he works twenty-four hours a day, the county won't pay for another lieutenant, like me,

which means you never get to be a sergeant."

Beckett pointed at the door. "Out."

After they left, he stood looking out the window.

Maybe he should have asked her to stay. Maybe she'd expected him to. And maybe he'd been afraid she'd say no.

The house was on a tree-lined street a short walk from downtown Meridian; a street for the wealthy and well-to-do; one of a long row of three story brick homes presenting an age-darkened, dull red facade broken by a broad flight of steps and portico before each, and distinguished from each other only by the individual treatment of the small lawns, gardens, and shrubbery.

Between every pair of homes, a short flight of steps led down to a below-street-level passageway to the rear, used by anyone who wouldn't be welcome at the imposing front door.

The woman who answered Beckett's knock was middle-aged and slender. Youth was gone, taking its softness with it and leaving her with an angular body, a sharply planed face, and a thin-lipped mouth that said she had found her taste of life bitter.

Beckett held up his I.D. folder.

"If you're Mrs. Dreshler, I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes. May I come in?"

The way she swung the door wide said he wasn't welcome but could be tolerated.

The exterior of the house was old, but the gleaming white kitchen could have come out of an architectural magazine article on contemporary design in a traditional building.

"Exactly what do you want, lieutenant?"

"Mrs. Whiting died suddenly, which isn't highly unusual for someone with her heart condition but which might indicate her death was caused by some sort of shock or stress. Any idea of what it might have been?"

"No. Saturday is my night off and I didn't even know she was dead until I returned at ten thirty."

"Why would someone in her condition ever be left alone?"

"Because the foolish woman insisted on it. The doctor recommended a full-time nurse but she refused to consider herself an invalid who needed constant care. With a phone at her elbow and help only ten or fifteen minutes away, she said she had no reason to worry."

"Yet she didn't use the phone."

"I can't imagine why."

"I wouldn't want to disturb Mr. Whiting if he's at home—"

"He's at the club."

"Then I would like to see where she died, simply to satisfy my own curiosity."

She led him upstairs. A short, tiled hallway curled around the main staircase to the foyer and the front door. The staircase was wide and carpeted, a landing halfway up. To his right, a pair of partially opened sliding mahogany doors revealed what appeared to be a sitting room, an easy chair before a dead fireplace. With Cynthia Whiting gone, a fire was no longer necessary.

Something had interrupted her reading and she'd started toward the second floor. If she had been investigating a strange noise, she would have been moving cautiously and certainly not placing a strain on her heart at that point. But if she had been frightened and running from something on this floor—

Beckett considered the distance. She really didn't get very far.

He moved into the room. Bookshelves lined one wall, the only touch not thoroughly feminine. The furniture, the paintings, the rug, the choice of colors—all said that this was her retreat, where she surrounded herself with the things she loved most, and to Beckett they said that underneath all the bitterness, Cynthia Whit-

ing was really a nice person and the boy had seen that.

A door to another room stood open. He stepped through.

The studio Mark had mentioned. A pair of handsome oak filing cabinets flanked an antique rolltop desk in one corner; a grand piano was backed into another. The door he had just come through was evidently where Mark had listened, the argument taking place in the sitting room.

Beckett didn't doubt the boy had heard what he said he heard.

Light from the broad windows behind the piano reflected from the polished surface. The teacher gone, it would remain silent.

"There is nothing worse than a career that is unfulfilled, which is why I go out of my way to help the kids coming up," Toni had once told him. "And if you can't be there yourself, there is nothing better than to see someone you've helped take center stage."

Cynthia Whiting must have felt the same way.

Arms folded, Mrs. Dreshler was leaning against the wall.

"Her half of the house?" he asked.

Mrs. Dreshler smiled slightly, as though it was a stupid question.

"Did they argue a great deal?"

"Not really."

Some people didn't lie well at all. He didn't ask if she'd heard Avery threaten to kill his wife. He was sure she had, if not when Mark heard him, then at another time.

"I appreciate your taking time to talk to me."

"Not at all. Did you find what you were looking for?"

"Since I had nothing in mind, I can't say one way or the other."

As they entered the foyer, the sour look on her face eased, probably because he was leaving.

"You can use the front door, lieutenant."

Beckett stepped out onto the dusk-dimmed portico. The snow-covered park across the street appeared dirty gray, the limbs of the trees stark.

"Sorry I can't turn the light on for you. Something has been wrong with it for several weeks."

"It isn't necessary. It must be very quiet here at night."

"Especially at this time of year."

He started toward the street, paused, and looked back. Framed by the open doorway and backlit by the bright foyer, the silhouette of the woman loomed featureless and as foreboding as the angel of death.

Beckett's scalp prickled. The boy had been right. Someone

had murdered Cynthia Whiting, but without a break, he'd never prove it.

His radio was squawking when he opened the car door. Spocker wanted him to return to the Municipal Building immediately.

The man sitting at the table with Hendryx in the interrogation room behind the one-way glass was in his mid-twenties, blond hair cut short, face lean, eyes hard and defiant.

"His name is Gordon," said Spocker. "He's one of two permanent maintenance men held over during the winter at the country club. When you mentioned the work-four-days, take-two-off routine, Hendryx remembered that was the system out there, so he checked. Every burglary victim was a member, a common denominator we hadn't come up with yet. He also remembered Gordon worked there and that he's served time for burglary."

"And found Gordon's days off matched the dates of the burglaries."

"You've got it. He brought him in and we picked up a search warrant for his apartment. Bingo. Not only some of the stolen merchandise, but also those."

Spocker indicated a theatri-

cal makeup kit sitting on the table before Hendryx along with several wigs and a rubber mask.

Images flashed through Beckett's mind, sorting and rearranging themselves until they settled. His scalp prickled again. A long shot, but locked in by a gut feeling that he had to be right.

"Now you know why no two descriptions matched and why he always hit an empty house. Working at the club, he was in a position to know who would be away soaking up sun on a cruise or on one of the islands."

"I don't think a maintenance man would," said Beckett slowly. "But the manager—"

"Whiting?" Spocker stared at him. "He couldn't need money that badly."

"Not money. Cash. Let's see if the tarot cards in my head are wrong."

Gordon looked up as Beckett entered the interrogation room, his expression amused.

"The heavy artillery won't help you, Hendryx. I'm not going to do any big time. Maybe ten to twenty and out in seven."

"Try life," said Beckett. "And maybe out in twenty."

Gordon laughed. "For burglary?"

"For murder. If I'm right, your bank account will show a big deposit about a week ago, more than you could have made from the burglaries. You can

laugh and you can tap dance around, but if the money is there, you're it."

Gordon came halfway up out of the chair, suddenly pale and his laughter gone.

Beckett put an edge to his voice. "You have thirty seconds to decide if you take it alone or make a deal and put it where it belongs."

Gordon breathed deeply, his eyes locked on Beckett's.

"What the hell," he said. "I never liked a guy who wouldn't do his own dirty work. You can have him."

The boy sat on the edge of the sofa, his grandmother's arm around him; not the usual grayhaired granny, but a young one with styled hair, dressed in a blue suit over a very feminine ruffled blouse. A businesswoman obviously, and a successful one.

"How's your arthritis?" asked Beckett.

The eyebrows arched. "What arthritis?"

Mark looked at the ceiling innocently. Beckett grinned.

"You were right, Mark. Avery Whiting did murder his wife. Not personally. He arranged for someone else to do it." Beckett glanced at Mrs. Forman. "You may not want me to go into the details with Mark."

"I'd rather he heard them

from you than read them in the newspaper."

Beckett nodded. "All right. Whiting could live well on the allowance his wife gave him, but he didn't have access to enough cash to hire someone to kill for him. Those people don't take credit cards, at least not yet. He made a deal to provide Gordon with the addresses of club members he knew were away so that Gordon could burglarize the homes at his leisure until Whiting had accumulated enough profit from the burglaries to serve as a generous down payment. Whiting would give him the balance when the job was complete. Since the odds of being caught were remote, Gordon went along. Even if we did pick him up for the burglaries, he'd have been well ahead because of the money he'd made. Neither anticipated that we'd connect Gordon to the death of Mrs. Whiting."

Mrs. Forman frowned. "But how could he have killed her? She was alone, the door was locked, and everyone believed her heart had simply failed."

"Except Mark. All Gordon did was go to the house when Whiting told him to and ring the front door bell. Whiting had told his wife he was expecting a package so she had no suspicions at all, and in the event she was cautious, he turned out the bulb in the porch lamp so

that she couldn't see who was there until she opened the door. Gordon charged at her out of the darkness wearing one of those rubber monster face masks. The one he used is enough to cause a normal heart to skip a few beats. You can imagine what it did to Mrs. Whiting. She staggered back, tripped, and struck her head, which didn't help her at all. Gordon closed the door and walked away. Even if she didn't die after a traumatic experience like that, she had to be a great deal closer to her grave, and perhaps would never have recovered, and if she did, who would put much stock in her story of a monster at the door? When she did die before they could do anything for her, Whiting thought he'd won all the marbles. A woman with a bad heart suffered an attack and died. There was no reason for anyone to suspect anything else until Mark came along."

He rose and held out his hand. "Thank you, Mark."

The boy followed Beckett to his car. "I'll always hate those damned masks."

"I can understand that, but the mask is only a piece of molded rubber for people to have fun with. Like a great many other things that are innocent in themselves, it was used by two people for their own purposes. And if Avery hadn't

thought of the mask, he'd have come up with something else. Forget the mask. Just remember you could have said nothing, but you felt you were right and you did something about it and that's all anyone can expect from any man. Too many of us are too ready to talk ourselves out of doing what we should because we're afraid someone will laugh at us or hurt our feelings."

"I'll bet you never do that."

"Don't make that mistake, Mark. We all back off at one time or another. Stop in once in a while and let me know how you're doing. I suppose it won't be long before you'll be using that grant Mrs. Whiting left you."

The low temperatures had hung on but the cold had nothing to do with the way the boy's shoulders slumped. "It takes more than money, you know. I'm not ready and what do I do now that she's gone? I know people didn't like her but she was the best. Everyone said

that." He was skirting around it, but there was more. He was only fourteen, but a mature fourteen, and he'd had a crush on Cynthia Whiting that was as important to him as his music. Right now he probably didn't give a damn if he ever played again.

"I've been thinking about that," said Beckett slowly. "Suppose I come up with someone you could consider even better than she was?"

His voice said Beckett was wasting his time. "You couldn't."

"I can try, even though it may not be easy. I might even have to carry her all the way from New York. But we make a deal first."

"What kind of deal?"

"No apples for this teacher and no falling in love. Find someone your own age. This one's mine." The wet eyes fixed on Beckett, surprised that he understood.

"Deal?" asked Beckett.

"Deal." It was the first time Beckett had seen him smile.

UNSOLVED

by
Susan Zivich

Unsolved at present, that is, but can you work it out?

The answer will appear in the May issue.

The Princess of Shropshire and three other princesses were captured by four ferocious dragons. Luckily, they were rescued by four brave princes, including Prince Nathan; one of the four was the Prince of Chippenham. From the following clues, can you match each princess (and her kingdom) with the fire-breathing dragon who captured her and the prince (and his kingdom) who rescued her?

1. Princess Genevieve, who was rescued by the Prince of Nottingham, was not the one captured by the dragon called Brujo.
2. The Prince of Durham fought the dragon called Shrayik.
3. Prince Geoffrey rescued the Princess of Cheshire.
4. Princess Catherine was held captive by the dragon called Trollkarl.
5. Winifred was the Princess of Lancashire.
6. Prince Lionel rescued Princess Regina.
7. Prince Erwin lived in Huntingham.
8. The dragon called Gespent captured the Princess of Berkshire.

See page 83 for the solution to the March puzzle.

"The Princesses and the Dragons" by Susan Zivich, reprinted from Dell Book of Logic Problems #2 © Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

FICTION

The Disappearance of Daphne

by Gregor
Robinson

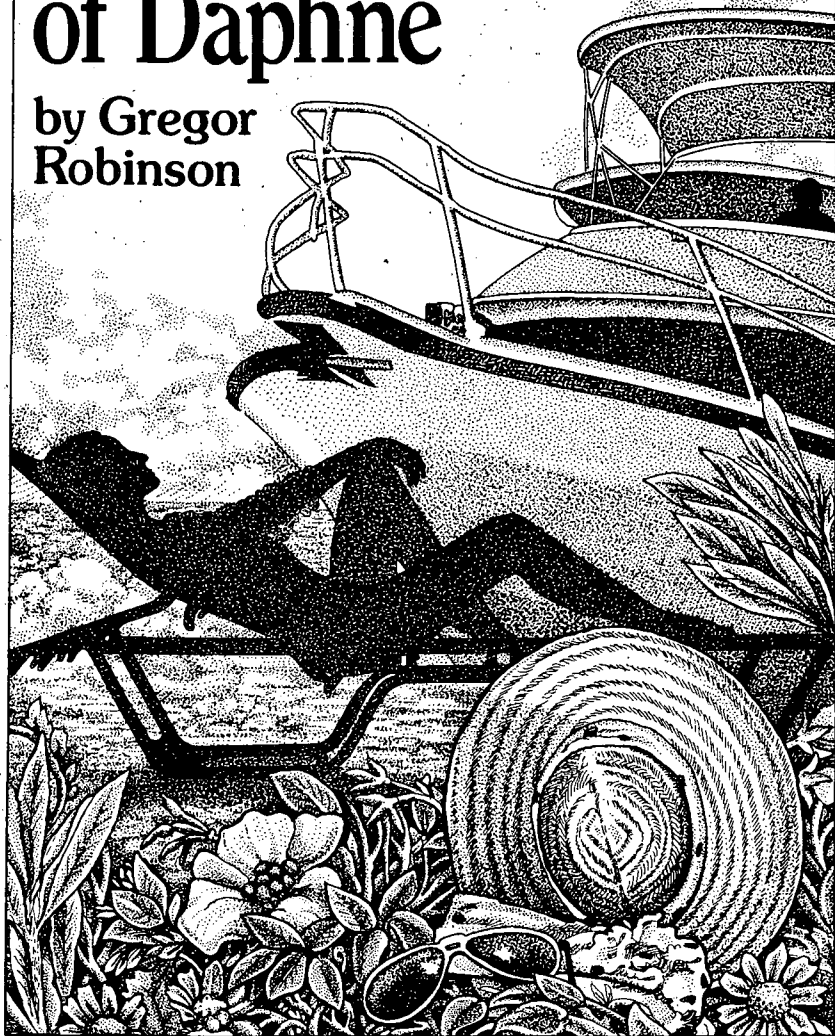


Illustration by Kurt Wallace

In bed, Daphne wore the briefest of white lace panties, with tiny blue satin bows at the sides, and nothing else. Mind you, this is merely conjecture, since I never actually saw her in bed. I realize now that I was obsessed with Daphne, obsessed from the moment I met her. I thought she came from a sensuous, languid world of which I—a mere banker—knew nothing, a world of passion and excitement. Her disappearance only made her more exotic—like an erotic dream about someone you know: for days afterwards you see the person in a different light. This all happened in the West Indies, under the coconut palms, where everything is bathed in bright light, and perhaps that had something to do with how I saw it. Everyone else said the disappearance of Daphne was murder.

I met Daphne early on the first morning of her visit, a Thursday. I was making coffee at the kitchen counter that faced the living room when she came out of the guest room. Already she had a tan. Her hair was black and thick and she wore it shoulder length. She was part way across the room before she noticed me. She looked up and with a languid gesture brushed aside the hair that fell across one eye.

"Hi," she said.

She continued across the room, making no attempt to cover herself. She was lean but she had full breasts, fuller than they would look under a sweater or a dress, perhaps because she was so tall. I was recently single again—it was the reason I'd come to the islands—and I stared. She didn't care. I'd like to say that I knew from that moment there would be trouble, but Daphne had a wide mouth and generous lips that made me think of other things. I could never be objective about her after that.

A few days before, Healey had called from Nassau on the radio-telephone: Would I mind putting up some friends of his for a few nights, a couple? They had arrived in the Bahamas early; it was Christmas and the hotel would be full until their room reservations came due. I had agreed; Healey was higher up in the bank than I was; in a way he was my boss. He had hired a boat and brought them over the previous evening, and they had been asleep when I came in.

For the first several days I didn't see much of my guests: Thursday I worked late; on Friday I took the ferry across the channel and flew to Miami for the day. At night and in the mornings I could hear them moving in their room, seldom speaking. When I came in late at night I saw Daphne's expensive black-frame sunglasses open on the counter, her Bain de Soleil. Her sandals, supple

and bleached by the sun, lay in the middle of the room; she must have kicked them off as she walked in.

I never saw anything of his strewn around. In the bathroom his shaving kit was hidden snugly away above the medicine chest. His name was Larry and he was a real estate lawyer. They had come to the islands because they were trying to recover from something; Healey didn't know exactly what. He thought it had something to do with a photographer. Daphne modeled, part-time.

After breakfast on Saturday, the first time I had properly met them, Daphne and I walked down the road to Drover's store. Drover overcharged and carried only a limited selection of goods, but the place was clean and nearby, which was more than could be said for the other grocery stores on the island. Above the boxes of fruit, above the freezer, above the shelves of bottles and tins were posted hand-printed homilies on the Christian way of life. The sign by the tonic water read: "No matter how dark and lonely the road; the Lord walks with you."

"Oh, God," said Daphne, "look at *that*." She laughed easily, like a movie star. She had assurance.

Drover glanced in our direction, his glasses glinting in the light of the fluorescent lamp. He was a lay preacher at the Evangelical church. On the cash register there was a faded news clipping of the burning of Yorkminster Cathedral, and above it, written with a broad felt pen, the words, "God's will be done." As we were checking out, Drover said in his soft, nasal voice,

"You be coming Christmas Eve, Mr. Rennison?"

I said I expected I would. Drover nodded in response, unsmiling. He carefully avoided looking at Daphne. I did not. She was wearing a short pink jersey dress, belted with a white sash at the waist, loose and low at the front. She wore her sunglasses on a silver cord. I never saw her without those glasses around her neck. I have them still.

Larry, Daphne, and I lunched together on the little stone terrace of my house, which overlooked the entrance to the harbor. Daphne ate lots of everything, and with gusto. She was not someone who worried about her diet. Afterwards she sucked her juicy fingers dry. Larry was more fastidious: he picked away at his chicken and concentrated on the gin. I noticed that they hardly looked at one another.

"So whose idea was it to come down here anyway?" I said. I was not curious; it was an innocuous remark, meant to get the conversation going. Daphne glared at Larry.

"Don't look at *me*," she said. It turned out that she hadn't wanted to come; it had all been his idea. It seemed to me that here was a reconciliation that would not work out.

After lunch I offered Daphne a section of the paper.

"I don't read newspapers," she said. "I don't like to get my hands dirty." She meant it as a joke but it was the truth all the same. Larry looked up.

"Daphne never knows what's going on." He had brought with him a copy of *The Economist*. "The original airhead," he said.

"Right. I'll get the dessert," I said, bustling. "Fresh fruit."

In the afternoon I took them both to the museum, a little house which had been purchased and refurbished with the help of donations from members of the local community, both the expatriates and those whose families had been on the island for generations. It had only recently been opened. The attendant was a black man, too timid to say anything when Daphne, disobeying a sign, picked up fragments of crockery to get a better look. She perused the rusting tools and old fishing gear, the strange implements which had once been used to make rope, the pieces of calico and old clothing. She said,

"Is there someplace we can *buy* stuff?"

I took them to the craft shop where Daphne tried on several straw hats. These were handmade by the woman who sat on a chair by the door, fanning herself, watching. Daphne turned from the mirror toward us, one hand against her hip.

"What do you think of this?" she asked.

"How much?" said Larry.

"Seventeen dollars." She returned the hat to the shelf. "Junk. You can get better stuff in Palm Beach."

The old woman fanning herself by the door didn't move, didn't blink. Daphne had been on the island three days but already the people in the village were coming to know her. They noticed the way she behaved: vaguely distracted, superior, somehow oblivious of them. What I noticed was the way she ran her tongue across her lips. I had never seen a more alluring woman.

After the visit to the craft shop, Larry said,

"Is it true that drug smugglers use this island?"

I told him that it was true. Colombians brought the stuff in by air; locals picked it up and stored it; men in fast boats shipped it to Florida. Dangerous people all of them.

"I thought so," said Larry. He strolled along towards the Poolside Bar of the Majestic Hotel with his paper. Daphne said she was

going to the beach on the ocean side of the island. She had already changed. Over her bathing suit she wore a thin white kimono, the folds of which moved with the sway of her hips.

Late Sunday afternoon, Drover came to see me. He was accompanied by a large black woman whose name I didn't know but whom I knew to be his assistant at the church, several of his siblings and cousins, and two or three other local people. A deputation. They looked quite grim.

"Mr. Rennison," Drover said, "that woman, she's been going topless on the beach. We got children around here. You got to talk to her. She's your guest. It ain't Christian."

"Right," I said. "I'll speak to her tomorrow." Nobody moved. "What, something else?" I said.

"Mr. Rennison, you got to talk to her now."

"All right, all right. I'll talk to her now. You can go." As they walked away, I heard Drover muttering about the Lord.

I found Daphne on a lonely stretch of sand, far from the hotel; she had not sought out a place to be noticed but people noticed anyway. She must have been aware of the commotion she was causing. Beneath the palm trees some young boys pretended to be absorbed in play; every few moments they stole a look. Farther along the beach, a group of older boys and men had plainly gathered to watch.

Daphne didn't care. Her head was to one side on the soft wicker basket that served as a pillow. She wore the black sunglasses and I couldn't tell if she was asleep or not. Between her legs on the sand lay a paperback novel, unopened.

"Daphne," I said.

She turned, moving her hand to her forehead.

"Hello, David." She smiled. "Coming swimming?"

"No, not swimming. Actually, I'm here because there have been complaints." She was looking up at me. "You've got to wear your bathing suit."

"Oh, God. They're so provincial. Here, give me a hand."

She reached forward and I helped her up. I saw the ripple of her oiled skin, her tawny legs unbending. Her hair brushed my shoulder. She picked up the top of her bathing suit from the wicker bag, reached behind her back and clipped it. The boys under the palm trees along the beach were still, watching.

"Okay, let's go," Daphne said.

The sun was low in the sky but still very, very hot.

On Tuesday morning, Daphne and Larry moved to the Majestic Hotel where they had taken one of the small cottages near the pool which overlooked the ocean. Daphne could walk straight out of the door of her villa and through a hedge where a short path and steps led to the beach. There she would sunbathe and snorkel—she was at home and confident in the water and thought nothing of swimming out to the reef by herself. She had made a friend at the hotel, another beautiful woman like herself. Sometimes they went to the beach together. Walking along the sand, I heard them laughing as they lay in the sun.

I rarely saw Larry and Daphne together after they moved from my house; in fact, I rarely saw them at all. At the Yacht Club I heard from Burnett that there had been more complaints about Daphne at the beach, from persons in the expatriate community—older, retired people—as well as from Drover and the villagers. One way or another, many people had found themselves at the far end of the beach when Daphne was there.

"She and her fellow had another row last night. You could hear the yelling from the bar," Burnett said. "I wonder what it would be like with a woman like that."

I wondered too. Every man did.

Larry took to drinking by himself down at the Riverside Lounge rather than at the Majestic. It was where the seedier element gathered; you could buy drugs there. One day he came into the bank and cashed traveler's checks worth two thousand dollars. I had to authorize such a large transaction myself.

"Find something nice to buy?" I said. I couldn't imagine what there was at that price in the village—apart from cocaine. Larry said nothing.

Once I saw Daphne with another man, a visitor from a gleaming yacht in the harbor. They were sitting at one of the round white iron tables at the Poolside Bar, out of the way, beneath a coconut palm. The man wore white cotton trousers and no shirt and when he lit a cigarette, Daphne reached across the table to brush fallen ash from the black curly hairs that covered his chest.

I had agreed to attend the service at the Evangelical church partly because Drover had asked me—he was an important local customer of the bank—and partly to put some faint spirituality into tropical Christmas. The rest of the holiday would be drinking, eating, and the sun—a carnival atmosphere. I had no sympathy with the Methodists in their austere little chapel, nor with the

Catholics, who met at sunrise and held hands beneath the large tree in front of the post office. There were other celebrations in the bush, strange ceremonies mixing voodoo, Catholicism, and God knows what. From the harbor you could hear the wailing, see the flicker of flame through the woods.

"Gives me the creeps," said Healey. We were standing on the government dock. Healey was over from Nassau for the holiday. He would be taking Daphne and Larry back to Marsh Harbour after New Year's.

We stared over the oily waters of the harbor, caught momentarily in the crossing beam from the lighthouse. He said,

"It'll be worse later tonight, when the drinking starts."

I helped Healey carry his things up to my house—a small overnight bag and several bottles of dark rum—and then I left to attend Drover's service.

The congregation was made up almost entirely of local people. Many were relations of Drover's, descendants of the small group of families who had originally settled the island. From South Carolina they had come; in the Bahamian accent of the voices that filled the church was a hint of southern drawl. I saw the man who ran the museum, the lady who owned the craft shop, the postmaster, Constable MacMahon, Mrs. Rainey who sold fish. I took a seat at the back, and then I noticed Daphne. She was sitting two rows ahead, with Larry and the friend with whom I had seen her on the beach. We were largely in darkness; the room was illuminated only by white candles which surrounded the altar and which gave off a dense, sweet aroma. When Daphne turned, I saw the smile on her lips and the sparkle of her eyes. She was wearing a white sundress that fell off one shoulder. Even in that dim light her skin was an oily gold. Around her neck were the sunglasses on their silver cord. She was an alien here.

"Stand up for Jesus!" Drover demanded, and we rose and sang. Children performed a series of tableaux and then were ushered out. We sang again: "Silent Night," then a strange, local song, with a kind of chant for the chorus.

Daphne and her friend were talking, amused. I could see their heads bobbing and I could hear sibilant whispers and snatches of words and sunny laughter. Their voices became louder; during the reading of the lesson by Drover's assistant, everyone in the back of the church could hear them.

"He has a big *dog* on his boat," Daphne said. She was speaking of the man with whom I had seen her at the hotel. I had noticed

the dog myself, down at the harbor. The reading ended. Daphne and her friend began to giggle. Larry shifted in his seat, edging away from the two women. Did he know about the man with the yacht?

The sermon opened with the story of the baby in the manger and the Star of Bethlehem but soon moved towards the themes with which Drover was more at home. He had started in a soft voice, the voice we heard in the store, but soon he spoke with feeling. It was the high point of his year.

"Why did Jesus come to us? Why? He came, my friends, because we are sinners. We are all sinners . . ."

I could see Daphne doubled over, shaking, trying to suppress her mirth, uncontrollable, like a schoolgirl. She was excited that night. She tried a cough, to cover the laughter, but she only drew more attention to herself. Drover's forehead was glistening. He spoke of money. He spoke of drugs. He spoke especially of adultery. He hurled accusations of corruption at us, imprecations. He glared down to the back of the church.

"Hypocrisy. Hypocrisy and evil are filling the world. But God will make them pay. God's will be done!"

His voice was like a command, above which Daphne's laugh burst forth like the ringing of a bell and, cascading, filled the hall. I left the service with that laugh ringing in my ears.

Back at the house I had dinner with Healey and Burnett. We drank the dark rum. All night long we heard the sounds of celebration in the town: the clanking of sticks pulled along the picket fence that lined the Queen's Highway; the clatter of metal garbage cans rolling down the pavement; the staccato burst of fireworks above a muffled reggae beat from the harbor.

An early view of Daphne's disappearance was that she had been taken away and raped by wild Haitians who lived in the bush, men who, lurking in the trees, had seen her on the beach as I had—half-naked, tall, and white. This was the preferred story at the Yacht Club; I heard it from Burnett many times.

Others, in the village, said that the white boys with whom she had been drinking and dancing earlier in the evening were involved. She had enticed them, and after hours of rum and debauchery she had been left on the beach to be carried away by the sea. There had been trouble before on Christmas Eve. Whatever had happened, people said she had it coming.

The known facts were more mundane. After church, Daphne and

her friend sat at the hotel bar drinking with Larry. When he went to bed, they had joined in the dancing down by the Government pier. Then they returned to the hotel for a nightcap. That was the last anyone saw of her. In the morning Larry assumed Daphne had gone to the beach, as she usually did, but then she had not returned for lunch. Because of sharks beyond the reef, the police said, there was little chance of the body's being found. That was the official version: that Daphne had drowned while swimming alone in the early morning. Constable MacMahon told me this himself four days later when he came in to do his banking.

"What about Larry?" I asked.

"What are you saying?" he said.

"The estranged husband," I said. "Everyone knows they fought. She flirted with other men. He was the one who wanted her to come down to the islands—she didn't want to come. Maybe all the time he was planning to do her in."

"He says he was in their villa the whole night. We can't prove otherwise."

So I told Constable MacMahon about Larry's cashing two thousand in traveler's checks. "Perhaps he paid someone down at the Riverside to kill her," I added.

"You have a good imagination." Constable MacMahon looked at me warily. Then he said, "You're right, as a matter of fact. He hired a pair of Colombians last week. We had a tipoff from someone in the Riverside kitchen. Trouble is, the contract was for New Year's Eve, not Christmas. The fellows he hired weren't even here that night; they were in Miami, and they can prove it. Looks like they conned him, another dumb tourist with too much cash." He paused to wipe his brow. "Besides, we have no body."

So they had no murder. Healey took Larry across the channel in the big outboard the day after New Year's.

A week or two later I was in Drover's store, standing by the cash register. We were alone. Drover went into the back room and returned with a paper bag.

"Maybe you want these," he said as he handed me the bag. There was a look of triumph in his eyes. I believe he was meaning to give me a message of some kind.

I looked in the bag and saw the sunglasses with the silver straps.

"Where did you get them?"

"Some fishermen found them," said Drover. "Boys from the church."

"Where did they find them?"

He hesitated for only a moment. "Don't know. Washed up down the beach somewhere, I guess."

He rang up my groceries and packed them carefully into a white plastic bag.

"God's will, a thing like that," he said, not looking at me this time. "God's will."

I had no doubt that Drover and his followers were capable of murder. They would see it differently, of course, themselves not as killers but as instruments of God's will, cleansing the island of sin and adultery and evil influences like the woman Daphne from the corrupt north. But I refused to believe it. My version is that Daphne went with the man in the white pants, swam out early in the morning to meet a boat from his yacht (I know she was a strong swimmer), and that one day I'll see her again, lithe and golden on a white beach.

SOLUTION TO THE MARCH "UNSOLVED":

1. Maria, conservatory
2. Mary, billiards room
3. Marlena, library
4. Martha, dining room
5. Marianne, bedroom

FICTION

How to Murder Your Spouse

by David Pierce



Illustration by Hank Blaustein

84

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Edward Thackston had every reason to kill his wife: Lillie was excessively complaining, lazy, overweight, and she hated to read. So when he discovered *How to Murder Your Spouse* by Dr. Harvey Conkwright at the local bookstore, buried on the bottom shelf behind some children's fairy tales, he surreptitiously carried it to the sales counter hidden between a copy of *How to Grow Fatter Tomatoes* and *Making PVC Furniture for Fun and Profit*.

"There it is!" the sales clerk nearly shouted, as if she'd found a lost contact lens and everyone could stop looking now. She held the book up next to her face like a box of soap powder on a TV commercial and tapped her long index finger on the spine; her nail *clicked* against the slick jacket. "This is the last copy I know of in this part of the country. I know because I called *everywhere*." She puffed and her evenly cut bangs waved at Edward. "A man was in here just last week asking about this." She was smiling, shaking her head with disbelief.

Edward nodded and smiled also, being polite. He checked his watch and prompted the lady to please hurry, but she missed his subtle hint.

"Did you know that Dr. Conkwright is dead now?"

Edward shook his head.

"Yeah! Automobile wreck. An *accident* they say." She giggled at the obvious irony. "Now, if you're really interested in *this*, then I'll show you what I sold to that other gentleman." She moved to leave the register and to strand Edward.

"Please," he said, and stopped her by raising an arm across the aisle.

"No problem. No problem." She backpedaled to her spot behind the register. "You just looked like a man who likes to keep up with the times."

It was Monday night and Lillie wouldn't be home from playing bingo until late. So in the privacy of his own living room, Edward sat down in his easy chair (after discarding an empty potato chip bag first) and removed the new/old book from the plastic shopping bag.

It was as thick as a dictionary, four hundred and seventy-two pages. The edges had yellowed a bit and on the back was a black and white photograph of Dr. Harvey Conkwright. He was definitely the professor-looking type: grayish hair, round spectacles, and a serious countenance. A wicked smile spread across Edward's face as he stared at the photograph and wondered whatever had happened to *his* spouse.

He traced a finger down the table of contents. Chapter One was entitled "Accidental Falls." He read through the chapter and soon found a scenario perfect for the Thackston household. Before he retired to bed, Edward collected all the soap from the bathroom.

"Honey! Come on down. I've got breakfast ready!"

Edward called from the foot of the stairs. He was nervous, yet excited. The steps Edward stood at the foot of were hardwood, stained and lacquered, and now each one was polished with a thin coat of Dial soap (he happily hummed the commercial's theme song). He had been up way past midnight glazing each step. His cramping back muscles and bruised knees testified to that.

Lillie had returned late from Monday night bingo as he had predicted (she had won another afghan; it lay on the floor just inside the front door) and had gone straight to bed. A full day of soap operas and an evening of bingo is enough to exhaust anyone.

He paced about anxiously at the foot of the stairs, expecting any minute to see her shuffling down the hallway, her housecoat turned inside out (she always took it off that way and

never bothered to straighten it out in the mornings), toilet paper wrapped around her head like a turban to protect the fifteen dollar wash-and-style she got every Saturday, and eyelids half closed, dreading the full, busy day of soaps and phone calls. And, oh yes, this was Tuesday. The Avon lady would be here for at least two hours—had to run the vacuum in the living room.

Come on. Come on.

"All right, Edward," came the wide awake voice from above. Edward stopped pacing and watched curiously as one would stop to watch a mufflerless car come into view from around a corner, refusing to believe a mere car could be making that sound.

He heard *thud thud thud*. She was not shuffling—she was bounding.

When she appeared at the top of the stairs, she was not wearing an inside-out house coat but a lavender jogging suit. And in place of the toilet paper on her head, she wore a matching lavender sweatband. She looked like Jane Fonda's portly sister.

She hefted her rear up onto the banister, raised her feet, and rode the rail all the way to Edward, who stood, slack-jawed, at the foot of the seventeen soapy steps.

She jogged in place at the foot

of the stairs following her successful flight. "Good morning, Ed's." She was chewing gum and it popped rudely, making little *clicking* noises like fingernails tapping a book jacket. "See the afghan I won?"

Edward nodded.

"I'm jogging now, did you know that?"

Edward shook his head.

"A little jogging would do wonders for yourself, you know." She was beginning to pant. "I'll have that breakfast when I get back," she said and waved a tata. "Oh, by the way," she stopped in the open doorway and turned back. "Only one egg for me." She smiled again and patted the bulge of lavender that was part jogging suit, mostly stomach. *Click click click* went the gum.

Edward nodded.

While Lillie was jogging, Edward referred to Dr. Conkwright's how-to manual once again. In an orderly fashion, he turned to Chapter Two: "Assassination." That seemed like a pretty strong remedy. But jogging? Something had definitely happened to Lillie. Maybe she was losing it—and at an advanced rate. The thought of a crazy Lillie was enough to scare Edward straight to the yellow pages. He thumbed through the "A" section and mused over

the numerous display ads.

A week passed and Lillie jogged every day. She was panting less now. Edward only hoped every day that nothing would snap before Wednesday. He had called every single number listed and Wednesday was the earliest time slot anyone could fit him in. Monday night Lillie came home with another afghan. Tuesday night she mysteriously left the house without a word and Edward let her go without questioning, afraid that in her condition she could spring like a cobra. He figured she must be getting worse because this time she carried with her a white bathrobe, rolled up and tucked under her arm.

Edward's special guest showed up at two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, punctual as a good assassin should be, dressed entirely in black—pants, shoes, and long sleeved turtleneck. Probably used to working the night shift, Edward thought.

The business card the paid killer gave to Edward said his name was *Boomer Bang Bang* (obviously his professional name). He was a lot older than Edward had imagined, maybe in his fifties. But there was no substitute for experience, Edward reminded himself. This man's face was rough, weath-

ered with deep lines, evidence of a lot of outside work. He had beautiful silver hair, though, kind of long and swept back above the ears.

"Er . . . ah . . . should I call you Boomer or just Mr.—"

"Boomer would be fine," the assassin answered in a dry, raspy voice that'd make Clint Eastwood shiver.

As Edward laid out the plan and explained to Boomer that Lillie was napping on the sofa, Boomer pulled a length of rawhide shoestring around his forehead and tied a hard square knot in back that no doubt would give him trouble later. He then raised his pants leg and unsheathed a foot-long knife. He clamped the knife between his teeth and started for the living room.

"Wait," Edward stopped him. "This isn't going to be . . . messy, is it?"

The assassin frowned. He seemed insulted. He removed the knife and rasped, "I do good work. And I offer you a money back guarantee. If it's cleanliness you want, call the Immaculate Brothers and they can put you on their six month waiting list."

When he said six months, Edward thought the foot-long knife had just been inserted into the pit of his own stomach. "Okay. Go ahead. Just be care-

ful. The carpet—it's not that old . . ."

Boomer Bang Bang re-inserted the knife between his teeth, making the steely, glassy sound of a bit fitted into a horse's mouth, and stole away into the living room as quiet as a shadow with silver hair.

Edward leaned against the door, his ear pressed against the cool wood, and listened to the *hum* of silence. The assassin was weightless, floating toward his victim like a deadly bee. Then . . .

HiYAH! (Just like Bruce Lee.)
UUGG! CRASH (Edward recognized the sound of an end table lamp falling in ruin . . .)
AARRGG! HiYAH! BUMP BUMP BANG! HiYAH! CRACK! (. . . a piece of furniture or Lillie's arm . . .)
AARRGG! UUGG! CRASH! (. . . the other end table lamp)
AARRGG! HiYAH! THUD!

And then silence.

Edward listened to the ringing silence for a long time before he pushed open the door and peeked around the edge. Just as he had feared, both end table lamps had been shattered and broken glass rained over the not-too-old carpet. But what upset him the most was the sight of Lillie standing in the middle of the living room, looking down at something hidden by the sofa. She was dressed in

a white bathrobe, panting heavily, and poised like Bruce Lee's portly sister.

"This nut tried to kill me," she said between pants.

Edward nodded, nonplussed.

Now she smiled, realizing her recent feat. And with her hair slightly mussed, as if she'd ridden across town in the back seat of a convertible, her beaming smile, and her face flushed a bright scarlet, Edward thought she was remotely attractive. "I'm taking karate lessons now, Ed's. Didn't I tell you?"

Edward shook his head.

"Yeah. Had my first class last night. Instructor says I'm a natural. I was just practicing a little," she said as she chopped the air and issued a soft *hiyah*. "Sorry about the lamps. Hey, what are you doing home so early anyway?"

Edward decided to question Mr. Bang Bang further about that money back guarantee.

That night, while Lillie practiced her karate in the hallway, Edward discreetly pulled Dr. Conkwright's *How to Murder Your Spouse* out from under his mattress as if it were a dirty novel. He impatiently skimmed over Chapters Three and Four—"Decapitation" and "Drowning"—but bent the book back on Chapter Five, breaking its spine, so it would stay open

as he read about "Electrocution."

He was just making a list of recommended supplies to pick up at the hardware store when all of a sudden Lillie's bare foot punched through the wall just above the bedroom television. Her foot, powdered white with drywall dust, looked like a piece of modern art hanging on the wall.

Edward finished the list and hid the book away, as if the foot could see what he was doing. He had to move quickly because the situation was getting critical. He didn't sleep a wink that night.

On Monday night she came home with another afghan. On Tuesday night she went to her karate class again, and while she was gone, Edward set the stage. He ran an extension cord from the wall plug behind the refrigerator. With a screwdriver and a hammer, he pulled the baseboard and window facing out enough to conceal the cord, then touched up the scarred paint with shoe polish (Dr. Conkwright was a perfectionist). He twisted the naked strands of the single hot wire around the cabinet's brass knob. He was supposed to fasten the other wire to a copper-woven mat and position the

mat so it'd be stepped on at the same instant the knob would be touched. Edward wasn't nearly the perfectionist Dr. Conkwright was, though. In place of a copper-woven mat, Edward used a twelve-inch pizza pan and an alligator clip. Lillie would be in such a hurry, he predicted, she'd step on the pan before ever noticing it. And when she opened the cabinet door—*poof!* Or rather, *zap!* There would be no missing this time. Electrocution is electrocution.

"Honey! I can't seem to find the decaffeinated coffee!" Edward called from the foot of the stairs.

"Did you look in the cabinet over the sink?"

He answered, "Sorry." The inflection in his voice implied that he had, but still couldn't find it.

"I'll be there in a minute," came her reply.

Edward did a jig back to the kitchen, dumped his decaffeinated coffee into the sink, plugged in his homemade electrocutor, and hid behind the morning newspaper, not sure he wanted to see this.

A moment later he heard her footfalls down the hallway, the padding of her bare feet on the hardwood steps (*Now she uses the steps!*), and finally came her

voice in the same room. "I don't know why you can't find it," she said as she crossed the linoleum floor in four strides. Edward peeked from beneath the bottom edge of the newspaper and saw her naked feet—(Where'd she get that tan?). And, just as he had planned, just as Dr. Harvey Conkwright had written, she stepped right dead-center on the big, flat pizza pan, her naked foot making the perfect ground.

Behind the newspaper Edward tensed and grimaced. He squinted his eyes and braced himself as if he were expecting an explosion (Chapter Six) rather than an electrocution. He heard the cabinet doors open and close: *swoosh, bang, swoosh, bang*. Any second now, he thought.

"Oh, here it is," she said, and then the last *swoosh bang*.

Edward jerked the newspaper down and his jaw seemed to drop with it. His expression of amazement grew even larger at the sight of Lillie standing before him in only her undergarments (Had she lost that much weight?). She was holding a jar of decaffeinated coffee and smiling with the success of having found it.

Edward's gaze was quickly drawn to the top of her head. She was wearing a plastic bag punched full of holes where

strands of hair had been pulled through and rolled in pink curlers that were lined up all over her head like tiny sausage links. She looked like Phyllis Diller's scantily clad little sister.

"I'm giving myself a perm, Ed's. Didn't I tell you?" she said in response to his stare.

Edward shook his head.

"Yeah, sorry I forgot to tell you." She waggled the jar of instant coffee. "You're going to have to fix this yourself. Hard to do anything with these on." She waved her hands to show Edward the gaudy protective rubber gloves that were a part of every do-it-yourself home permanent kit.

Edward nodded.

Little by little it seemed that Edward's motives for murdering Lillie had disappeared. She never complained about anything any more, the house was always immaculate, and she was even starting to look *good*. She no longer had those funny little bulges around her tummy and on the sides of her hips. And with her thirty dollar tan and her twenty dollar home perm, she was ready to make TV commercials. It scared him now to think of how close he had come to losing her. Rather than waste any more of his time reading Dr. Conkwright, Edward de-

cided to visit a travel agency. Two months ago he would never have dreamed of a second honeymoon, not with Lillie anyway.

Edward stood in the kitchen and looked down into the mouth of the trash compactor. The remains of last week's groceries were crushed and mashed into what looked like an old fashioned poultice for what ails you. He unceremoniously dropped in *How to Murder Your Spouse* by Dr. Harvey Conkwright and turned the appliance on.

After the compactor had ground and belched all it was going to, Edward left the sparkling kitchen and walked into the living room, greeted by an aroma redolent of springtime in a pine thicket. Lillie was sitting on the couch with her back to him. Her wavy, bouncy hair was inviting. Edward peered over her shoulder to see that she was reading a *book*. Not a large book, but still a book.

"Lillie!" He was barely able to suppress the shout. He was beyond happy: he was ecstatic. "You're reading a book! This is great!" Edward held onto the end of the couch to steady himself as he sat down beside her. Had she mentally read *The List of Changes Required to Prevent Murder* that he had carried in his vindictive heart for so long? "I have to be honest with you,

darling." He choked back the tears of happiness that threatened to make an idiot of him. "I haven't been the happiest man in the world lately, but . . ."

Lillie looked up from her book and offered him an understanding smile, a sympathetic smile, a smile that caused Edward to melt and to puddle right there on the end of the couch. She looked like Elizabeth Taylor's little sister.

Edward forced himself to remain tame. "Lillie," he began as he reached into his suitcoat pocket, "I have here a couple of tickets for a week-long cruise." He produced two multicolored tickets with the name of an exotic island stamped on the front of each and waved them before her. "How about it?"

Her smile never wavered. Without a word she took the tickets and then resumed her reading. Edward was surprised to find himself suddenly aroused by the coquettish game. "What book are you reading anyway?" he asked. He raised up slightly and leaned forward in order to read the small print.

Lillie casually removed the book from her lap to reveal a steely-blue pistol. Edward saw fire flash from the little round O of the barrel's end. It happened so quickly that he never had a chance to assume the expression of horror that should

have frozen on his face as he died. He fell back on the not-so-old carpet as his life quickly escaped through the small hole in his chest. He died with his eyes squinted and his lips pursed, an expression he often assumed when trying to read small print.

The doorbell rang as if this scene were part of a play and the gunshot had been the actor's cue. Lillie closed her book and laid it on the end table where a lamp used to be. She covered Edward's body with her latest afghan, which had been neatly draped across the back of the couch, and answered the door.

A tall man wearing a white sports coat, a purple shirt open at the collar, and also a thirty dollar tan, stepped in and gave Lillie a kiss usually reserved for the end of the movie.

"I was so glad you called. So you finally got a chance to read it, huh?" this man asked.

"I cheated and skipped to Chapter Ten," Lillie answered apologetically. "Just finished it this minute, though, and it really works." A smile blossomed and she beamed proudly.

"Oh?" He looked around expectantly and noticed the lumpy afghan. "Hey! Hey! So it does!"

"Yeah, it was great." She shared his happiness. "Do you know that that was the most of

a single book I've ever read?"

"No kidding?"

She shook her head. "You've been a great inspiration to me, Johnny."

He kissed her again, blatantly disrespectful of the dead. "More good news," he said. "I told all my karate students that I'll be gone for a week. And someone else will call the numbers at the bingo hall. Why don't we take a little vacation?" He pulled her close and they rubbed noses.

Lillie held up two multicolored tickets and fanned them teasingly. "How about the Caribbean?"

Lillie went upstairs to pack while Johnny folded up Edward and stuffed him into the trunk of his foreign car. He picked up Lillie's new book from the end table and figured he'd better get rid of it, too. He opened the trash compactor and remembered for a moment, as he held

the book over the compacted garbage, the day he had bought it, shortly after he had met Lillie at the bingo hall. The edition he had asked for, the bookstore didn't carry. The sales clerk had searched thoroughly but had been unable to find it. She had guaranteed him, though, that this one was better, more current. It was only about a hundred pages, could hardly be called a book.

He laughed at the simple, blatant title, *How to Murder Your Spouse*, and beneath that, in smaller print, *The Simplified Edition*. He dropped it into the mouth of the trash compactor. The author's picture stared up at him, definitely the professor type: grayish hair, little round spectacles, a serious countenance. He smiled wickedly and wondered whatever happened to *her* spouse. "Thanks a lot, Dr. Helen Conkwright," Johnny said as he pushed the COMPACT button.

Important Notice to Subscribers: All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1932, Marion, O. 43305. For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

FICTION

Guilt Trip

by Jeffrey Bush



I plunk the twelve-speeder in the hall, peek in the mirror—hey, not bad, not bad, you tanned, tousle-haired, blue-eyed boy—and go hunting for Andy. My significant other.

Where is she?

Not on the balcony.

Not in the living area.

In the lying-on-the-futon-watching-David-Letterman area.
Packing.

Illustration by Trish Burgio

Why?

Got it!

Two-day business trip to the heartland. Idaho, Omaha, some place like that, with a lot of a's and o's.

"Hey, pal!" I say, delighted, thinking, what a couple!

Young, vibrant social worker and management consultant, and she's the management consultant, just the way Gloria Steinem intended her to be.

"You're back," she says.

In a flat voice. Without looking up. Throwing shimmery, management-consultant lingerie into her carry-on.

For some reason, she is not glad to see me.

Something is bugging her. That she ought to communicate.

But what?

This is a person who has difficulty communicating.

It's one of the things about her I am deeply moved by.

Here is someone, I said to myself when we met, three months ago, who needs help. To reach out to another human being.

Two days later, I brought over my clothes and my stereo. In spite of her protests.

I knew she needed me.

I've been living with her ever since. In spite of her objections.

I'm very nurturing:

"A little trouble," I confess.

I hate to go on. I hate trouble. But I'm very open.

"With my bike."

I shake my head.

"Lucky I noticed. Or at this moment I'd be bouncing off parked cars, all the way down to the bottom of the canyon. Total wipeout. Paraplegic, minimum. Anguished scenes at the bedside, when do we pull the plug?"

What a picture! I sink into a bamboo chair, overcome.

No difficulty communicating for me. I'm very verbal.

She is looking around the room. Table, dresser, what has she forgotten?

Concentration.

Tight-lipped concentration.

That's another thing about her I am deeply moved by.

"And speaking of lucky—"

I resume our conversation.

"How about that business yesterday?"

I frown. I have an interesting frown.

"That business with my scuba gear?"

I am addressing an empty room.

"It's lucky I noticed *that*," I say in clear, carrying tones, that will reach whatever area of her apartment she's gone to.

"I could be drifting around down there with the fishes. Those are pearls that were his eyes, et cetera, et cetera."

I shiver involuntarily. I'm very visual.

She returns, with herbal tea. She jams it in her bag.

Determination.

Grim determination.

That's another thing.

"And what I don't understand—" and I really don't, now I think about it, it's definitely puzzling —is how it happened. Why are these little objects coming loose? Yesterday, a gadget on my scuba gear—"

Just three days ago, she'd asked me about the valve on my oxygen tank. It had been okay then.

"This morning, a doodad on my bike—"

She'd asked me about the brakes on my bicycle, too.

"I mean, golly—" I chuckle. "This is turning out to be a hazardous weekend."

She is checking her watch.

Time to go.

It reminds me that I'm supposed to be going somewhere myself, on my non-functional bicycle.

"The question is—what's going to happen this afternoon?"

I laugh.

"While I'm a thousand feet up?"

I have an infectious laugh.

"Hang gliding?"

She knows all about my hang gliding. Just last weekend, I'd shown her exactly how the cables control the little gizmos that operate the flaps.

She is trying to zip up her bag.

"If I can get there, that is. With my bike out of order. And you using your car."

I snap my fingers.

"Hey! You can drop me off on your way to the airport."

She straightens. She looks at me.

"What's the use?" she asks hopelessly.

Wait a minute.

What is going on here?

"Well, now—"

"That won't work, either."

A trifle pessimistic, surely.

"Those gliders," I begin reassuringly, "are—"

"O God."

This is serious.

I lean forward.

"Hey, man. You're trying to tell me something, aren't you? Something important."

Her lower lip is trembling.

"You never leave. And you never stop talking."

This woman is at the end of her resources.

"You're the one who has to leave. But we don't have to stop—"

She shuts her eyes.

"I'm trapped. Forever."

I smile gently.

"Actually, you'll be back after a couple of—"

She clenches her hands.

"There's no way I can get rid of you, is there?"

At that instant, I've got it.

"Hey! That's it, isn't it?"

How could I have missed it?

"You're afraid—you're abandoning me."

I see it all.

"And you can't stand it."

The pain!

"It's driving you crazy."

The guilt!

"You'd like to *get rid of me*."

"And I *can't!*" she cries, tears of despair in her eyes. "I try, and try, and I *can't!*"

"Of course not," I say. Whisper, really. Sitting back, weak with emotion. Because this is it, this is what helping is all about, this is why there are men and women. "Don't you know I'll always be here for you, buddy?"

FICTION

Not Quite Dead



by Arthur Leslie

Illustration by Patrick Welsh

98

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

“C all your first witness,” said Hamilton.

I stood and faced the jury. “I call Chris Jaffree.”

The bailiff got Jaffree and the clerk swore him in. Jaffree was six feet tall with black hair and brown eyes. I went through the preliminary questions. Jaffree said he was twenty-four years old, unemployed, and lived on Coffee Street.

“Do you know the defendant in this case, Alan Crow?” I asked.

“Yes, sir, for about a year.”

“How did you meet him?”

“He moved into the trailer behind my house.”

“Do you have a dog?”

“Yes, sir. His name is King. He’s a German shepherd.”

“Do you have a fenced-in yard?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you have an occasion to be in your back yard on July fourth of last year?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did anything unusual happen?”

“My girlfriend and I were back there playing fetch with King. Crow and a friend of his were sitting behind his trailer. Linda, that’s my girlfriend, threw a ball over the fence and it landed about ten feet away from Alan. I asked him to throw it to me but he wouldn’t.”

“Did he say anything?”

Jaffree paused and glanced

at Judge Hamilton. “He told me to go to ‘H.’ ”

“What did you do?”

“I started to climb over the fence and Alan jumped up and told me not to come on his property. Then I told him I wanted my ball and he said that was tough. I said I was gonna get it. He said if I set foot on his property, he would beat me up.”

“Was the defendant drinking?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You saw him drinking?”

“He and his friend were drinking Budweiser.”

“Was the defendant drunk?” I asked.

Hank Johnson jumped. “Objection, judge,” he said. “That calls for an opinion and the witness has not been qualified as an expert of any kind.” Hank was two years out of law school and he was appointed to defend Crow. He was young, good-looking, effective, and dressed in black.

The judge didn’t even look up. “Sustained,” he said.

I stopped and collected my thoughts.

“Did the defendant stagger when he walked?” I asked.

“Yes, sir.”

“Was his speech slurred?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jaffree.

“Who was the defendant’s friend?”

“Some girl. I don’t know her name. She was trying to talk

sense into Alan. She even got the ball, but Alan grabbed it and threw it down."

"Where did it land?"

"About thirty feet from the fence."

"What happened next?"

"She convinced him to go inside and they went inside."

"What next?"

"I climbed over the fence to get my ball. Right then Crow come crashing out of the trailer, so I grabbed the ball and ran back to the fence. While I was climbing over, he ran up and hit me in the side."

"Go on," I said.

"I jumped on over. Crow called me a dirty name and said, 'I told you not to come over here'; then he climbed over the fence."

"What did you do?"

"I just stood there. King was going crazy and Linda was holding his collar. Then Alan come over to me and swung at my face with his right. I blocked it and hit him in the face. King got away from Linda. He jumped up and grabbed Crow's arm. I stepped back and told King to lay off, but he didn't."

"What happened next?"

"My punch had staggered Crow and King was ripping up his arm pretty good."

"Is King trained as an attack dog?"

"Absolutely not. He did it from instinct."

"All right. Go ahead," I said.

"Crow started kicking King and hitting his head, so I went in and beat him up."

"Where did you hit him?"

Jaffree smiled. "All over."

"Did you knock him out?"

"No, sir. I landed five or six hits. Crow staggered into the fence and I grabbed King's back legs and pulled him away. Then Linda and I and King ran inside and I called the law."

"Was the defendant still in your back yard when the police arrived?"

"No, sir. He got up and climbed back over right after we all went inside. Crow's friend came out screaming and she helped him back inside his trailer. Then she left."

"Did the defendant stay in his trailer?"

"Yes, sir. That's where the cops got him."

I sat down and went over my checklist. I'd made all the items but one.

"Did all this happen in Mobile County, Alabama?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," said Jaffree.

"Your witness," I said.

Hank Johnson stood and walked over to the jury box. He turned suddenly. "Isn't it a fact that you are an expert in karate?"

"I'm not an expert and it's not karate," said Jaffree.

"Not karate? What then?" asked Hank.

"It's tae kwon , and I was

only a yellow belt at the time."

"Well, isn't that a form of karate?"

"No, not really."

"But you were a yellow belt?"

"Yes, sir."

"Isn't it a fact that this fight took place on Alan's side of the fence and not yours?"

"No, sir."

"And isn't it true that your dog is, in fact, a vicious attack dog?"

"No, sir. He is not."

"Well, he sure knew what to do, didn't he?" asked Hank.

"Any dog would."

"I'm not so sure that any dog would do as well as yours did. Didn't you command the dog to attack?"

"No, sir. He didn't attack till Crow hit me."

"You mean tried to hit you, right?"

"Well, he hit me while I was on the fence, but King didn't bite him till he hit me on my side of the fence," said Jaffree.

"But Alan never hit you on your side of the fence. You blocked it, right?"

"Right."

"And that's when you beat him up," said Hank.

"After he started hitting King."

"And your dog tore his arm to shreds, right?"

"Well, I wouldn't say to shreds," said Jaffree.

"What would you call it?"

"Well, King ripped him up a little."

Hank removed his eyeglasses and raised his eyebrows.

"A little?"

"Yes, sir."

"You think fifty stitches is about right?"

"Objection," I yelled. "He's trying to introduce things not in evidence."

Judge Hamilton pointed at Hank. "You know better than that. If you want to show the extent of the injury, then call the appropriate witness. Sustained."

"Could I have a limiting instruction?" I asked.

The judge went through the farce of telling the jury to ignore what they just heard.

Hank continued. "Isn't it a fact that your dog jumped the fence and attacked Alan Crow?"

"No, sir."

"And when Alan defended himself against this vicious attack, you jumped the fence and beat him to a pulp?"

"That's impossible," said Jaffree.

Hank sat down at the defendant's table next to Crow. "I have no more questions," he paused and waved his hand in contempt, "of this witness."

Jaffree stood but I waved him back. "One more thing," I said. "You just said it was impossible. What did you mean?"

"I got a six foot fence," he said. "King ain't never jumped it in his life."

"How old is King?"

"He's four," said Jaffree.

"You've had him all his life?"

"Since he was a pup."

"That's all," I said.

Jaffree left the courtroom and I called Linda Chaney. The bailiff got her and the clerk swore her in. She wasn't beautiful but she had a certain sultry charm. She stood about five foot six, was slender and well dressed.

She said she was a nurse and that she and Chris Jaffree had dated but they broke up several months before. She backed Jaffree all the way. The only thing not consistent with his testimony was that she said Crow was drinking Schlitz.

I rested my case. Hank requested a conference and we approached the bench. Hank whispered a motion for a directed verdict, which Hamilton denied.

"Do you have any witnesses?" Hamilton asked.

Hank glanced at his watch. "Judge, it's eleven thirty and I'd like some time to talk to my man. Could we go ahead and break for lunch?"

"Are you gonna call Crow?"

"That's just it. I'm dead set against it because of his record, but Crow's adamant. He wants to testify."

"It's his trial," said the judge.

"I know, but I'd like one more crack at talking him out of it."

"Do you have any other witnesses?" I asked.

Hank shook his head.

"Very well," said Judge Hamilton.

Hank and I sat down and the judge, in his best courtroom manner, told the jury to be back at one thirty. I ran down the street to the dog stand and then back to my office.

Everyone was back at one thirty.

"Is the defense ready?"

"Yes, sir, judge," said Hank.

"Call your witness."

"Call Alan Crow," said Hank.

Crow stood and was sworn. He was five foot four with long, greasy, blond hair. He wore a shortsleeved shirt and badly fitting double knit pants. Crow gave his age as forty-two and said he was a truck driver by trade.

"Do you live directly behind Chris Jaffree?" asked Hank.

"Yes, sir."

"You've heard the testimony in this case. Did the incident take place as presented here today?"

"No, sir."

"What really happened?" asked Hank.

"Well, sir, me and Melissa was sitting out back minding our own business. Jaffree was throwing a ball and his dog was

fetching it. Then Jaffree, not the girl, threw one over the fence and, if you ask me, he done it on purpose. Anyway, lickety split, that dog was over the fence, which, by the way, is four feet high, not six feet."

"How close was the ball to you?"

"'Bout four feet," said Crow.

"Have you had trouble with this dog before?"

"He bit me one time before this. Bit me on the leg."

"Did you tell Jaffree about it?" asked Hank.

"All he did was call me a liar."

"Back to the fourth of July," said Hank. "You said the ball was right at your feet and this dog had jumped the fence. What happened?"

"Melissa was scared, so we got up and moved away. The dog come up and started growling at me and I told him to git. Anyway, we turned around to get in the trailer and he bit the back of my leg, so I kicked him. He jumped up on me like he was going for my neck, and I pushed him off and kicked him again. By then Jaffree was over the fence. He come at me with that karate, and between him and the dog, I didn't have a chance. Jaffree kicked me in the private parts and I went down. That's when the dog tore up my arm. I was down covering my face and neck with my arms."

"What then?" asked Hank.

"They finally quit and Melissa and I went inside. She went to the drugstore to get some bandages, but I was arrested by the time she got back."

"Did the police take you to the hospital?"

"Yes, sir. They gave me fifty-four stitches."

"Show the jury your arm," said Hank.

Crow stood and approached the jury box. He stuck out his left arm. I flinched inside. The scars were extensive indeed, reaching from the elbow to the wrist with five or six branches wrapping all the way around his arm. Crow got back on the stand.

Hank continued: "Were you drunk?"

"I only had two or three beers and they were Coors, not Budweiser or Schlitz." He laughed. "I never drink Schlitz."

"Did you hit Jaffree first?"

"No, sir."

"I'm done," said Hank.

I gathered a pile of papers, taking my time for effect. I rubbed my eyes and then walked to the jury box. I turned and fired.

"Somebody's lying, aren't they?" I yelled.

"Yes, sir."

"When Chris Jaffree says you hit him first, is he lying?"

"He is."

"When Chris Jaffree says that

you jumped his fence and attacked him, is he lying?"

"Yes, sir," said Crow.

"When Linda Chaney says you attacked Chris, is she lying?"

"Yes, sir."

"When she says this fight took place on Jaffree's property, is she lying?"

"Yes, sir."

"Too bad King can't testify," I said. "Of course you'd call him a liar too, wouldn't you?"

Hank was on his feet. "Objection," he said. "He's badgering the witness."

"Indeed he is. Sustained," said Hamilton. "Don't badger the witness."

"What is Melissa's last name?" I asked.

"Melissa Jenkins," said Crow.

"Is she here today?"

"She couldn't get off work."

"Hum," I nodded knowingly. "So far you maintain that everyone but you is lying, is that right?"

"They're lying sure as I'm sitting here," said Crow.

"Did your lawyer explain to you about crimes of moral turpitude?"

"Yes, he did," said Crow.

"Did he tell you that certain previous convictions of a defendant can be introduced into evidence, not to show that the defendant committed this crime but to show that he might be lying under oath?"

"Something like that."

"Mr. Crow, have you ever been convicted of a crime of moral turpitude?" I asked.

"I've had my share," he said.

I waved the stack of papers in my hand. "Yes indeed, and then some," I said. "Let's see, did you plead guilty to the crime of petty larceny in 1960?"

"Yeah," he said. "But I didn't do it."

"Well, why did you plead guilty?" I asked.

"'Cause my lawyer told me to. He said I had a good deal, you know, probation and all that."

"And in 1963, were you convicted of assault, second degree?"

"Yeah."

"And in 1966, were you convicted of arson, second degree, for which you served three years in the penitentiary?"

"Yeah, but I didn't do that either," said Crow.

"You didn't?"

"No. I didn't."

"But you were convicted in a trial, just like this one?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"In 1971, were you convicted of manslaughter, for which you served ten years in the penitentiary?"

"Yes, sir," said Crow.

"So that gives you three prior felonies?"

"I guess so."

"No more questions." I sat down.

Crow left the stand and sat next to Hank.

"Call your next witness," said Judge Hamilton.

"The defense rests," said Hank.

In closing arguments I emphasized Crow's convictions, supposedly to show he might be lying, but that's a lie in itself. What I really meant was that Crow was a sorry criminal who got only part of what he deserved.

Hank argued Crow's story right down the line as if he believed every word. I still don't see how he got through it without smiling. He wrapped up by stressing that even if the jury believed Jaffree, Jaffree trespassed first.

Hamilton charged the jury on assault, third, and self-defense.

The jury went out and I waited in the witness room with Jaffree and Linda and King.

I'd told Jaffree to bring King down to show he wasn't vicious, but things had gone so well that I decided not to take the chance.

King was a big German shepherd-looking dog, though obviously not full-blooded. He sat quietly at Jaffree's feet, occasionally glancing at me and Linda but mostly attentive to his master.

"Do you think they'll find him guilty?" asked Jaffree.

"Don't see how they couldn't," I said. "It was like shooting fish

in a barrel. I think he had a better chance before he testified. He should have listened to his lawyer. Chris, I really appreciate your coming down. I know you didn't want to."

"He got the worst of it."

"Yeah, but I want him off the street," I said. "He got away from us last year on a burglary. The more time he spends in jail, the better."

As we talked, King studied me. I asked if I could pet him.

"Sure," Jaffree said. "Do it like this." Jaffree stroked King's upper chest with two fingers. "Just touch his chest. He don't like people petting his head."

King stiffened at my first touch but with kind words from Jaffree and a few minutes, he softened and eventually licked my hand.

Linda leaned on Jaffree's arm. "I think he likes you," she said. "That's rare."

"I think so, too," said Chris. "Do you like dogs?"

"Yeah," I said. "I've had a couple in my time. My wife has a poodle, but I ain't got much use for a poodle."

"Me neither," said Jaffree. "What kind of dogs do you like?"

"Shepherds," I said. "I'd love to have one, but we don't have a yard. We live in a condo and I can't see keeping a shepherd all cooped up."

"Do y'all walk your poodle a lot?" asked Jaffree.

"Julie usually runs home from work twice a day to walk her, but while we're not there, we have to keep her in the laundry room. She sleeps with us at night."

Jaffree smiled. "You know, two dogs are easier to keep than one."

"How do you figure?" I asked.

"In a situation like you got," said Jaffree, "they can keep each other company during the day."

"What about not having a yard?"

"Do you need a yard to run around in?"

"No."

"Well, it's the same thing. Dogs are just like little people," he said. "As long as they have a place to go to the bathroom, they can stay indoors most of the day. It just depends on what they're used to." Then Jaffree grinned again. "By the way, there's a female shepherd down the street from my house who just had a litter of puppies. We mated her to King. They ain't got no papers, but they are the prettiest little pups you've ever seen. I get the pick of the litter. You can have mine if you want. Why don't you come out and look them over?"

"I 'preciate it," I said. "I'll have to think about it."

The bailiff stuck his head into the witness room. "They're back," he said.

I stood. "Wanna watch?" I asked.

Jaffree put his arm around Linda. "No," he said. "I'll just sit tight."

I was right. The jury found him guilty. Since assault, third, is only a misdemeanor, he faced no more than a year. The judge in District Court had sentenced him to two months and Crow had appealed. Hamilton was not nearly so understanding. He gave Crow a year in the county jail.

In the witness room, Jaffree and Linda were laughing and practically sitting on each other.

"We got him," I said. "One year county time." I extended my hand and Jaffree shook it. "Thanks again," I said.

"Sure thing," he said. "Any time. Listen, come on out and look at those pups. King's the best dog in the world. It won't do any harm just to look, will it?"

I said I might come out but I knew I wouldn't.

Two weeks later, on a Saturday afternoon, I was in the country investigating the scene of a murder going to trial the following Monday. On my way home, I passed Coffee Street and realized I was in Jaffree's neighborhood. I found his house and rang the doorbell. There was no answer, so I walked to the side

of the house. Over the fence, I saw Jaffree seated in a lawn chair. He was drinking a beer and, as he turned, I realized that what I had thought was a cigarette was a joint. Jaffree's smile faded quick.

"Hey, Chris. I was in the neighborhood and I thought I'd drop by."

He fumbled with the joint and it fell at his feet. He covered it with a foot. "Ah—hey, man."

"Don't worry about it, Chris. I'm not on the time clock."

He smiled. "You don't mind?"

"Well, I ain't gonna turn you in," I said. "But put it up a minute, okay?"

"Sure. Come on in."

"How's King?" I asked. King sat in front of Jaffree, watching me closely.

"He's great," said Jaffree. "Wanna see a demonstration?"

"Sure."

Chris stood. He picked up the joint, knocked off the fire, and put it in his pocket.

"King, heel," he said.

King moved quickly behind Jaffree and sat on Jaffree's left. Jaffree walked away and King followed without another word. Jaffree stopped and King sat. He walked again and King kept up, making sharp turns with his head always at Jaffree's knee. Jaffree stopped and brought his right palm to King's face.

"King, stay," he said.

Jaffree walked away and King stayed. Jaffree faced King and said, "Come." King trotted to Jaffree and sat in front of him. "Stay," he said.

"That's great," I said. "Did you take him to obedience school?"

"No, it's just a matter of spending time and being patient. That and consistency."

"He's a fine companion," I said.

Jaffree smiled. "He's the best friend I got. He even sleeps with me when I'm home. A dog loves you like no person can. It's like my mom used to say, 'If you want perfect love, marry a dog.'"

"I got an idea," he said. "Let me show you something."

Jaffree ran into the house. I noticed the fence was six feet tall. King sat immobile where Jaffree had left him. Jaffree returned with a photo album. He opened it to an eight by ten black-and-white.

"He takes a good picture," I said.

"That's not this dog," said Jaffree.

"It looks like him."

"Yeah, I know. That's a dog I had when I was a kid. His name was King, too. See that black streak?"

I looked at the dog seated in front of me. King had a black head and a black streak from the nose to the tip of the tail.

The dog in the picture had the same markings except that the streak was a little slimmer. I turned a page to a small color photo and there was the old King with a small, skinny boy with a crewcut. The brown was identical in both dogs.

"That's amazing," I said. "It could be the same dog."

"Sometimes I think it is the same dog," he said. "I got this one about four months after the old King died. It was wild, man, I just got the urge one day and I went down to the Humane Society and there he was. I swear it's the same dog."

I looked through the album. The first half was devoted to the old King and the rest to the second. We talked about dogs, with Jaffree doing most of the talking.

I sat there remembering my old dog, dead for eight years. There had been a time when she was my only friend. I envied Jaffree.

"How's Linda?" I asked.

"She's great. We got back together. See what you did for me?" We laughed.

"What are you doing in this neck of the woods, anyway?" he asked.

"Checking out a murder scene. I like to see the site several times, if I can. It almost always helps. It's the Albert Speil murder. Heard about it?"

"Yeah. That fellow did it for revenge, right?"

I nodded. "That's what I think. Killed a man over a land deal."

We sat in silence, then he spoke. "I just don't see what good killing does, for revenge, I mean. The guy's dead, right? Nobody hurts when he's dead."

"Hey, big boy," said Linda. She stood at the gate.

"Hey, babe," said Jaffree. He jumped up and let her in. "Look what the cat dragged in."

"Come to get that dog, did you?" she asked.

"Well, no. Not really," I said.

"Hey, that's right," said Jaffree. "Let's walk down."

The closest neighbor was fifty yards away. The puppies were behind a shed in the back yard, all piled in a tall cardboard box.

"There's only three left," said Jaffree.

I peeked over the edge of the box. A little cream colored puppy with a black face and tail looked back with mournful eyes. I grinned. The puppy whined. I picked it up and checked the sex.

"You like girls or boys?" asked Linda.

"Girls," I said. I put the puppy on the ground and she jumped on my wingtips and grabbed a shoelace. I played with the puppy till it was too late to say no.

"Aren't you going to look at

the rest?" asked Jaffree. "You got the runt of the litter."

"I'm a runt myself," I laughed.

Before I left we showed King his daughter and I named her Princess on the spot. I didn't see Chris Jaffree again for more than a year.

I may not have seen Jaffree, but I thought about him almost every day. Cases came and went. I put some people in jail, cut deals with others, and flat lost a few.

Every day I'd come home to my wife and my dog. Jaffree was right. All it took was time, consistency, and patience. Two months' worth and Princess knew not to cross the street unless Julie or I said "okay." At four months she was fetching a tennis ball. One day in December she charged a jogger and I beat the hell out of her. Sometimes she was a pest, dropping her ball in my lap till I'd take her out to play. She chased rabbits that came from the woods. She'd chase them right to the curb and stop. Her specialty was keeping the squirrels in the trees. She wouldn't let a stranger within ten feet of me without growling. On nights when Julie and I argued, and I ended up on the sofa, Princess slept with her head inches from mine. All in all, I began to understand how close a man and a dog can get.

One day in April I was watching the news while Julie leashed the poodle for her afternoon walk. She opened the door and Princess was out in a flash. Julie screamed and I ran out quick. A woman held a small girl in her arms and Princess stood four feet away, barking. A bearded man moved menacingly toward Princess. I ran over and hit her several times. Julie grabbed Princess by the collar and took both dogs inside.

I put on my best smile and walked over to the man. I introduced myself and held out my hand to shake. He stood there with his arms crossed.

"I don't want to know your name," said the man with the beard. "You just keep your dog away from my girl."

"I'm sorry," I said. "She's never done anything like that before."

"I don't care about that," said the beard. "You just remember this. If I see that dog around my little girl again, I'll kill it." He shook his finger in my face. "I'll do everything in my power to kill it."

The woman and child had retreated to a car, and I noticed my neighbor was driving. The beard turned and climbed in. I heard the woman ask him, "What did you say to him?" Then the door closed. My

neighbor drove them away. Inside, Princess was in the laundry room, looking sheepish. Julie cried and I paced the floor.

An hour later my neighbor and the woman knocked at my door. She held the child in her arms. My neighbor looked nervous. He introduced the woman as his daughter.

"I'm sorry about Bill," she said. "He had a bad experience last month. A Doberman bit Stephanie, and he hasn't been the same since. He won't hurt your dog."

"I understand," I lied. "I'm just as shocked as you are 'cause Princess just isn't like that."

"I told Bill she's a good dog," my neighbor said. "I guess when Stephanie was running, she got confused."

They left and ten minutes later the beard came to the door and we both apologized. We shook hands this time.

After he left I smoked a cigarette, relaxed, and felt relief. I wondered what it meant to have children. I realized I really could understand Bill's anger. I understood because I, an assistant district attorney, a true believer in law and order, had temporarily gone insane. While I was smiling at the beard's shaking finger, I'd decided that if he killed my dog, I'd kill his child. I'd kill her and get away with it, too.

On a rotten, rainy Sunday in June, Julie met me at the door with serious eyes.

"Some guy named Chris called and wants you to call back."

I dialed the number, not knowing Chris who.

"This is Chris Jaffree," he said. "I don't know if you remember me, but we put Alan Crow in jail last year."

"Sure." I remembered Jaffree. "What can I do for you?"

"He killed King." Jaffree was crying. "That turkey killed my dog."

"What? When?"

"This morning, or last night. I found him this morning. Damn him, he killed my dog."

"Did you call the cops?"

"Yes, sir. I hope you don't mind me calling but they said we couldn't do anything."

Princess strolled up and dropped her ball in my lap.

"Why did they say we couldn't do anything?" I asked.

"'Cause there weren't no witnesses."

"How do you know it was Crow?"

"He called me and told me," said Jaffree.

"He called you?"

"Yes, sir. Can you help me? Could I maybe come over to your office tomorrow?"

Princess put her paw on my knee and tilted her head.

"No," I said. "I'll do better

than that. Why don't I come out there?"

"Would you, please?" he asked.

"Yeah. I'll be there in forty-five minutes."

I played fetch with Princess and then climbed into my car and headed out to the country.

Jaffree stood in the back yard, impervious to the rain. Linda's car was there, so I assumed she was inside.

"Thanks for coming," he said. "I found him over there." His voice broke as he pointed. "He was hung on the fence."

We walked over. "His stomach was cut open and all his guts were hanging all over the fence." Jaffree grabbed a log from the woodpile. He threw it against the fence. "Damn him," he said.

Jaffree fell down on the ground and grabbed wet grass. There was still gore on the ground and the stink nearby nearly pulled up my lunch.

"Where is King's body?"

"I took him to the vet. The deputy said to. I took pictures, too."

I helped Jaffree up and we went inside.

Linda sat on the sofa. "Could I make you some coffee?" she asked.

I nodded and she left for the kitchen. We sat down and I told Jaffree to start at the beginning.

"Last night I was at Linda's. I got home about ten this morning. I had a hangover, I guess that's why I didn't notice at first. Anyway, I got a Coke and then I saw him out the window. I went out where he was, all over everywhere." Jaffree cried again.

"It's okay," I said. "Just take your time."

"I didn't know what to do. I took him down, his body, that is. Then I come in and called the law. Right after I hung up, he called."

"Who?"

"Crow."

"What did he say exactly?" I asked.

"He said, 'You seen your dog lately? Last I saw of him, he was hanging around, know what I mean?' I called him a name, then he said, 'I'll get your next dog, too.' Then he hung up."

"So he didn't say who he was, right?"

"No. But I *know* it was him," said Jaffree. "Remember his accent? It was him all right."

"You say you took pictures?"

"The deputy said to," said Jaffree.

"Who was the deputy?"

"Deputy Benson. He's the one who said to take King to the vet for examination. Benson said we couldn't get him without a witness. He checked the neighbors. Do we have to have a witness?"

"Well, yes and no," I said.

Linda served the coffee and sat down next to Jaffree.

"You can sign a warrant," I said. "And we can arrest him, but he'll make bond. Then all we've got is your identification of his voice on the phone."

"But it was him, *I know* it was him."

"I don't doubt it was him, not at all. Tell you what, bring me the pictures and I'll get a good detective on the case and we'll see what we can turn up."

Jaffree pounded the table and his coffee spilled. "We gotta do something," he said. "All I can think about is killing that guy."

I stood and put my hand on his shoulder. "I'll do the best I can," I said.

The next day I called David Nash. He's the county's best detective and we understood each other. He came to my office and I told him what I knew. He said he had two robberies and two murders to work. I told him Jaffree was a personal friend, and Nash promised to give it a shot.

A week later, Nash returned.

"I checked with Jaffree's vet," said Nash. "He says the dog was dead before he was cut up. Its head was bashed in, probably with a hammer or something. Jaffree's neighbors know nothing, didn't hear anything, didn't see anything. I checked Crow's neighbors. After he got out of

jail, he moved into a trailer park. It's got five trailers. None of his neighbors knows anything. I guess they mind their own business. I confronted Crow and he denied it all the way around. Says he doesn't know for sure, but thinks he was home. He acted surprised, and that's the word, acted. He's our man all right. He laid the righteous indignation on real thick, but that won't lock him up."

Nash and I talked for twenty minutes. He'd been thorough but had come up empty. I thanked him and he left.

I called Jaffree and he came to the office.

"It's like this," I said. "You gotta be realistic. All we've got is your voice identification. I think we can get it past District Court, but I don't know if the grand jury will buy it."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, a case starts in District Court. If I can show just probable cause that Crow did it, then the judge kicks it to the grand jury. They look at cases and decide if they go to trial. If they think it should, then we're in front of a jury in Circuit Court, if not, they give him a no bill."

"You think they'd no-bill Crow?"

"Probably. We just don't have the evidence," I said.

"It was him, though. I know it was."

"It's gonna be hard to convince people that anybody would be that stupid. Some people will think you're making it up."

"What should I do?"

"It's up to you. If I were in your shoes, I'd want to cause him all the trouble I could. Go ahead and sign the warrant and we'll arrest him and give him a grilling. Who knows, maybe he'll confess, but I doubt it. If you do this thing, don't expect it to end up like last time. There's a chance we'll get him, but I doubt it. Just go down to District Court and tell the judge what you've told me. Make sure you take the pictures."

Jaffree signed the warrant and Nash arrested Crow. Nash grilled him but got nothing. Crow made bond in two days. Jaffree testified at the preliminary and the judge bought it. I think the judge was impressed by the pictures. They were gruesome indeed, in full color. He sent the case to the grand jury and bumped up the bond to ten grand, which landed Crow back in jail. He made bond again a week later.

Six weeks later, my boss, Al Fields, presented Crow's case to the grand jury, and Jaffree testified. Nothing else had turned up, but Jaffree was a good witness. I had high hopes.

Three weeks went by and the grand jury reported. I checked Crow's case first thing. Sure

enough, it was a no bill.

I decided a phone call wouldn't be enough, so the next afternoon I drove out. He didn't answer the door so I walked around. Jaffree was smoking a joint, as before. I went back to the car and honked the horn. He came around minus the joint.

"Come on in," he said and opened the gate.

I sat in the other chair. The woodpile against the fence had five or six logs. There was a long-handled axe stuck in the top log, and wood shavings covered the ground around the pile.

"Thanks for coming out," he said. "I heard they dropped the case."

"How'd you hear that?"

"I've been calling the clerk's office every morning. They told me yesterday."

"How's Linda?" I asked.

"She's fine. She's at work."

"Chris, I feel horrible about what's happened. I don't work for the D.A.'s office for nothing. I really believe in the system. Sometimes it makes mistakes, but in the whole scheme of things, it works. It's all we got. Crow's gonna go to jail sooner or later. He's mean and he's stupid and he won't stop till he gets life without parole. That won't bring King back, though. Last year, I asked you to do me a favor. Help me slam this guy in jail." I said. You didn't even

want to do it. You said he got the worst of it, but I talked you into it. Now King's dead and Crow's gloating. I guess I'm trying to say I'm sorry."

Jaffree touched my shoulder. "Hey, man," he said. "You're just doing your job. You did a good job and I was glad when we got him last year. I wouldn't do anything different even if I could. I don't know, I'm just trying to get by. Don't worry about me."

We talked some more. He told me King stories. Some about the first King, others about the second.

I got up to leave.

"By the way," I said. "Princess is pregnant. She's gonna have puppies in five or six weeks."

"Really?" He sounded excited. "Who's the father? Did you breed her?"

"No. It was true love. She got away one night. I never saw the father. I didn't even know she was in heat."

"Was it after King was dead?" asked Jaffree.

"Yeah. If you're interested, you're welcome to take your pick."

"I'll think about it."

Six weeks later, Princess had two puppies. I stayed up most of the night to help, but she seemed to know what to do, as the vet had said she would. One was a female, black all over.

The other was a male, brown with a black streak from head to tail. I was glad. I knew I had a customer.

I called Jaffree but I didn't describe the puppies. He came over on Saturday. He picked up the black streak, checked his sex, and with a breaking voice said, "It's King. He's come back to me."

I thought Jaffree would take the dog then and there, but he insisted that the puppy get mother's milk for a full six weeks.

A month later, I took the puppy out to Jaffree's house. Two months went by and I didn't hear a thing. But Jaffree was always on my mind when Princess fetched. She was the best dog I'd ever had. In many ways, she was my best friend, better, sometimes, than Julie. Not once did Princess judge me for anything I ever did.

On my way to the courthouse one morning, I listened to my favorite radio station. They have a good ten minutes devoted to the previous night's criminal activities. I guess it's kinda like a businessman listening to the market report. There was the normal stuff, mainly burglaries, a murder, and a rape. I perked up when I heard that Alan Crow had been admitted to the emergency room. The report was sketchy, but the gist of it was that Crow had been attacked by an assailant, un-

known, outside a local honky-tonk. The hospital said his condition was critical.

Two days later, a message on my desk said David Nash wanted to talk. I called and he walked up.

"Did you hear about our friend Alan Crow?" he asked.

"I heard somebody put him in the hospital. What happened?"

"It seems that Crow got drunk at the Poker Flats. He was smashed, from all reports. He left about midnight with a lady he'd just met. The girl says they were going to her place. You should see her, a real bullfrog. Anyway, she says she was parked about twenty yards from Crow's car. They'd been kissing by her car and she got in and started it up but was waiting for Crow so he could follow. Her headlights were pointing right at Crow's car. He got to his car but couldn't find the right key. All of a sudden this guy dressed all in black, with a ski mask, comes from around the car next to Crow's. He's got an axe and he hits Crow one time in the back. Then he takes off running through the woods behind the club. The girl called us and an ambulance."

"What about Crow?" I asked. "What's his condition?"

"Well, he'll live, if that's what you mean. It won't be much of a life, though. The blow severed his spinal cord at the seventh

vertebra. He's paralyzed from the neck down and will be for the rest of his life."

"Can he talk?"

"Yeah. I talked to him this afternoon. He said Chris Jaffree did it. I asked him how he knew, and he said he saw Jaffree's face." Nash laughed. "I told him that the girl said the guy had a ski mask. I don't think Crow saw anything. He kept insisting it was Jaffree. Said he *knew* it was Jaffree. I asked how he knew, and he said it was the dog."

"Did he admit to killing the dog?" I asked.

"He sure did, and I got it on tape. He sang like a mockingbird, gave me everything, even admitted calling Jaffree the next day."

"Sounds good to me," I said. "Have you talked to Jaffree yet?"

"I talked to him and his alibi. He says he was bar hopping that night and gave me the name of the bartender at the Barbary Coast. She got off at ten and says Jaffree was there when she left. I haven't done anything else."

We sat in silence a minute or two.

"How deep do you want me to dig?" asked Nash.

"You asking me how to do your job?"

"No. I just wanna know how bad you want Jaffree. I'll bet

my bottom dollar he's our man. How bad do you want him?"

"What are you saying, Nash? You want me to tell you to lay off, or something?"

"I ain't saying that. Just tell me. Do you want him?"

"Yeah, I want him. If you get the evidence, I'll jam him in jail. I won't like it, but I'll do it. I or somebody else here will. Crow would have been better off confessing right away. If I had my way, he'd be in jail, not living death for who knows how long. Like I say, you prove it and I'll put Jaffree in." Then I whispered, "But I really don't want him."

Nash whispered back, "I don't either. Well, I gotta go. Time to start on the Thompson killing. I figure Thompson stiffed somebody on a drug deal and that somebody got some revenge."

"Don't seem likethere's any revenge if you kill somebody."

"What's that?" asked Nash.

"Nothing. Just something I heard."

I called Nash two weeks later. He told me bluntly that he hadn't done anything and wasn't going to—was that okay? It was okay.

I waited another month to be sure the file was dead before I drove out to see Jaffree. It was another Saturday afternoon and I honked before I got out. Jaffree opened the gate before I got there.

"Come on in," he said. He got another chair. King eyed me and growled.

"King, sit. Stay," said Jaffree.

King sat and stayed.

"You'll never know how much I appreciate you giving me my dog back," he said.

"My pleasure. He seems to be doing well."

"You wouldn't believe it. He's the smartest dog in the world. He *knows*, man. I don't hardly have to teach him a thing. It just comes natural."

Everything looked the same except the woodpile. There were only two logs left and the axe was gone.

"How's Linda?" I asked.

"Don't know," said Jaffree. "We broke up again a month ago. I guess I've been pretty crazy lately."

"You shouldn't have done it, Chris."

"Done what?"

"You know what," I said. "Trying to kill Crow."

"I didn't do that. I swear it."

"Don't get me wrong, Chris. I'm not out here to trap you or get a confession. I don't want a confession. No, I'm not here for that, and I don't even judge you for it, but it was stupid. You could go to jail for a long time for something like that, maybe even for life. You ever been in jail?"

"No."

"Well, it's no fun. Chris, you're lucky as hell. If there hadn't been a witness, you might be sitting in jail right now. As it is, I think you'll get away with it as long as you keep your mouth shut and don't brag about it."

Jaffree sat in silence.

"Remember that," I said. "Especially girlfriends or a wife, if you ever get married. If you break up on bad terms, they'll turn you in for sure. Even though a wife can't testify, we land a whole load of criminals that way. Just don't tell anybody."

We sat in silence a few minutes' more. King watched us carefully and wagged his tail. I got up to leave.

"Well, one thing's for sure," I said. "Crow ain't never gonna bother anybody ever again."

Jaffree reached out and stroked King's chest.

"And he ain't gonna hurt my dog, either," he said.

I left.

Last week Crow copped a plea to a felony count of cruelty to animals. He put up a real fuss at the sentencing. He kept telling the judge that Jaffree had damn near killed him and we weren't doing a thing about it. I kind of rolled my eyes, like he was crazy, and I told the judge that our investigation had revealed absolutely no evidence that Jaffree was involved. With Crow's record, nobody cared.

Since Crow was an habitual offender, the minimum sentence was twenty years. That might as well have been a death sentence, considering his health, he was practically dead anyway, almost dead, but not quite.

MYSTERY CLASSIC



The Learned Adventure of the Dragon's Head

by Dorothy L. Sayers

“Uncle Peter!”

“Half a jiff, Gherkins. No, I don’t think I’ll take the Catullus, Mr. Ffolliott. After all, thirteen guineas is a bit steep without either the title or the last folio, what? But you might send me round the Vitruvius and the Satyricon when they come in; I’d like to have a look at them, anyhow. Well, old man, what is it?”

“Do come and look at these pictures, Uncle Peter. I’m sure it’s an awfully old book.”

Lord Peter Wimsey sighed as he picked his way out of Mr. Ffolliott’s dark back shop, strewn with the flotsam and jetsam of many libraries. An unexpected outbreak of measles at Mr. Bultridge’s excellent preparatory school, coinciding with the absence of the Duke and Duchess of Denver on the Continent, had saddled his lordship with his ten-year-old nephew, Viscount St. George, more commonly known as Young Jerry, Jerrykins, or Pickled Gherkins. Lord Peter was not one of those born uncles who delight old nurses by their fascinating “way with” children. He succeeded, however, in earning tolerance on honorable terms by treating the young with the same scrupulous politeness which he extended to their elders. He therefore prepared to receive Gherkins’s discovery with respect, though a child’s taste was not to be trusted, and the book might quite well be some horror of woolly mezzotints or an inferior modern reprint adorned with leprous electros. Nothing much better was really to be expected from the “cheap shelf” exposed to the dust of the street.

“Uncle! there’s such a funny man here, with a great long nose and ears and a tail and dogs’ heads all over his body. *Monstrum hoc Cracoviae*—that’s a monster, isn’t it? I should jolly well think it was. What’s *Cracoviae*, Uncle Peter?”

“Oh,” said Lord Peter, greatly relieved, “the Cracow monster?” A portrait of that distressing infant certainly argued a respectable antiquity. “Let’s have a look. Quite right, it’s a very old book—Munster’s *Cosmographia Universalis*. I’m glad you know good stuff when you see it, Gherkins. What’s the *Cosmographia* doing out here, Mr. Ffolliott, at five bob?”

“Well, my lord,” said the bookseller, who had followed his customers to the door, “it’s in a very bad state, you see; covers loose and nearly all the double-page maps missing. It came in a few weeks ago—dumped in with a collection we bought from a gentle-

man in Norfolk—you'll find his name in it—Dr. Conyers of Yelsall Manor. Of course, we might keep it and try to make up a complete copy when we get another example. But it's rather out of our line, as you know, classical authors being our specialty. So we just put it out to go for what it would fetch in the *status quo*, as you might say."

"Oh, look!" broke in Gherkins. "Here's a picture of a man being chopped up in little bits. What does it say about it?"

"I thought you could read Latin."

"Well, but it's all full of sort of pothooks. What do they mean?"

"They're just contractions," said Lord Peter patiently. "*Solent quoque hujus insulae cultores*—It is the custom of the dwellers in this island, when they see their parents stricken in years and of no further use, to take them down into the marketplace and sell them to the cannibals, who kill them and eat them for food. This they do also with younger persons when they fall into any desperate sickness."

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Ffolliott. "Rather sharp practice on the poor cannibals. They never got anything but tough old joints or diseased meat, eh?"

"The inhabitants seem to have had thoroughly advanced notions of business," agreed his lordship.

The viscount was enthralled.

"I *do* like this book," he said; "could I buy it out of my pocket money, please?"

Another problem for uncles, thought Lord Peter, rapidly ransacking his recollections of the *Cosmographia* to determine whether any of its illustrations were indelicate; for he knew the duchess to be straitlaced. On consideration, he could only remember one that was dubious, and there was a sporting chance that the duchess might fail to light upon it.

"Well," he said judicially, "in your place, Gherkins, I should be inclined to buy it. It's in a bad state, as Mr. Ffolliott has honorably told you—otherwise, of course, it would be exceedingly valuable; but, apart from the lost pages, it's a very nice clean copy, and certainly worth five shillings to you, if you think of starting a collection."

Till that moment, the viscount had obviously been more impressed by the cannibals than by the state of the margins, but the idea of figuring next term at Mr. Bultridge's as a collector of rare editions had undeniable charm.

"None of the other fellows collect books," he said; "they collect stamps, mostly. I think stamps are rather ordinary, don't you, Uncle Peter? I was rather thinking of giving up stamps. Mr. Porter, who takes us for history, has got a lot of books like yours, and he is a splendid man at footer."

Rightly interpreting this reference to Mr. Porter, Lord Peter gave it as his opinion that book collecting could be a perfectly manly pursuit. Girls, he said, practically never took it up, because it meant so much learning about dates and typefaces and other technicalities which called for a masculine brain.

"Besides," he added, "it's a very interesting book in itself, you know. Well worth dipping into."

"I'll take it, please," said the viscount, blushing a little at transacting so important and expensive a piece of business; for the duchess did not encourage lavish spending by little boys, and was strict in the matter of allowances.

Mr. Ffolliott bowed, and took the *Cosmographia* away to wrap it up.

"Are you all right for cash?" inquired Lord Peter discreetly. "Or can I be of temporary assistance?"

"No, thank you, uncle; I've got Aunt Mary's half-crown and four shillings of my pocket money, because, you see, with the measles happening, we didn't have our dormitory spread, and I was saving up for that."

The business being settled in this gentlemanly manner, and the budding bibliophile taking personal and immediate charge of the stout square volume, a taxi was chartered which, in due course of traffic delays, brought the *Cosmographia* to 110A Piccadilly.

"And who, Bunter, is Mr. Wilberforce Pope?"

"I do not think we know the gentleman, my lord. He is asking to see your lordship for a few minutes on business."

"He probably wants me to find a lost dog for his maiden aunt. What it is to have acquired a reputation as a sleuth! Show him in. Gherkins, if this good gentleman's business turns out to be private, you'd better retire into the dining room."

"Yes, Uncle Peter," said the viscount dutifully. He was extended on his stomach on the library hearthrug, laboriously picking his way through the more exciting-looking bits of the *Cosmographia*, with the aid of Messrs. Lewis & Short, whose monumental com-

pilation he had hitherto looked upon as a barbarous invention for the annoyance of upper forms.

Mr. Wilberforce Pope turned out to be a rather plump, fair gentleman in the late thirties, with a prematurely bald forehead, horn-rimmed spectacles, and an engaging manner.

"You will excuse my intrusion, won't you?" he began. "I'm sure you must think me a terrible nuisance. But I wormed your name and address out of Mr. Ffolliott. Not his fault, really. You won't blame him, will you? I positively badgered the poor man. Sat down on his doorstep and refused to go, though the boy was putting up the shutters. I'm afraid you will think me very silly when you know what it's all about. But you really mustn't hold poor Mr. Ffolliott responsible, now, will you?"

"Not at all," said his lordship. "I mean, I'm charmed and all that sort of thing. Something I can do for you about books? You're a collector, perhaps? Will you have a drink or anything?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Pope, with a faint giggle. "No, not exactly a collector. Thank you very much, just a spot—no, no literally a spot. Thank you; no—" he glanced round the bookshelves, with their rows of rich old leather bindings—"certainly not a collector. But I happen to be, er, interested—sentimentally interested—in a purchase you made yesterday. Really, such a very small matter. You will think it foolish. But I am told you are the present owner of a copy of Munster's *Cosmographia*, which used to belong to my uncle, Dr. Conyers."

Gherkins looked up suddenly, seeing that the conversation had a personal interest for him.

"Well, that's not quite correct," said Wimsey. "I was there at the time, but the actual purchaser is my nephew. Gerald, Mr. Pope is interested in your *Cosmographia*. My nephew, Lord St. George."

"How do you do, young man," said Mr. Pope affably. "I see that the collecting spirit runs in the family. A great Latin scholar, too, I expect, eh? Ready to decline *jusjurandum* with the best of us? Ha, ha! And what are you going to do when you grow up? Be lord chancellor, eh? Now, I bet you think you'd rather be an engine driver, what, what?"

"No, thank you," said the viscount, with aloofness.

"What, not an engine driver? Well, now, I want you to be a real businessman this time. Put through a book deal, you know. Your uncle will see I offer you a fair price, what? Ha, ha! Now, you see, that picture book of yours has a great value for me that it wouldn't

have for anybody else. When *I* was a little boy of your age it was one of my very greatest joys. I used to have it to look at on Sundays. Ah, dear! the happy hours I used to spend with those quaint old engravings, and the funny old maps with the ships and salamanders and '*Hic dracones*'—you know what that means, I dare say. What does it mean?"

"Here are dragons," said the viscount, unwillingly but still politely.

"Quite right. I *knew* you were a scholar."

"It's a very attractive book," said Lord Peter. "My nephew was quite entranced by the famous Cracow monster."

"Ah yes—a glorious monster, isn't it?" agreed Mr. Pope, with enthusiasm. "Many's the time I've fancied myself as Sir Lancelot or somebody on a white war horse, charging that monster, lance in rest, with the captive princess cheering me on. Ah! childhood! You're living the happiest days of your life, young man. You won't believe me, but you are."

"Now what is it exactly you want my nephew to do?" inquired Lord Peter a little sharply.

"Quite right, quite right. Well now, you know, my uncle, Dr. Conyers, sold his library a few months ago. I was abroad at the time, and it was only yesterday, when I went down to Yelsall on a visit, that I learnt the dear old book had gone with the rest. I can't tell you how distressed I was. I know it's not valuable—a great many pages missing and all that—but I can't bear to think of its being gone. So, purely from sentimental reasons, as I said, I hurried off to Ffolliott's to see if I could get it back. I was quite upset to find I was too late, and gave poor Mr. Ffolliott no peace till he told me the name of the purchaser. Now, you see, Lord St. George, I'm here to make you an offer for the book. Come, now, double what you gave for it. That's a good offer, isn't it, Lord Peter? Ha, ha! And you will be doing me a very great kindness as well."

Viscount St. George looked rather distressed, and turned appealingly to his uncle.

"Well, Gerald," said Lord Peter, "it's your affair, you know. What do you say?"

The viscount stood first on one leg and then on the other. The career of a book collector evidently had its problems, like other careers.

"If you please, Uncle Peter," he said, with embarrassment, "may I whisper?"

"It's not usually considered the thing to whisper, Gherkins, but you could ask Mr. Pope for time to consider his offer. Or you could say you would prefer to consult me first. That would be quite in order."

"Then, if you don't mind, Mr. Pope, I should like to consult my uncle first."

"Certainly, certainly; ha, ha!" said Mr. Pope. "Very prudent to consult a collector of greater experience, what? Ah! the younger generation, eh, Lord Peter? Regular little businessmen already."

"Excuse us, then, for one moment," said Lord Peter, and drew his nephew into the dining room.

"I say, Uncle Peter," said the collector breathlessly, when the door was shut, "need I give him my book? I don't think he's a very nice man. I *hate* people who ask you to decline nouns for them."

"Certainly you needn't, Gherkins, if you don't want to. The book is yours, and you've a right to it."

"What would *you* do, uncle?"

Before replying, Lord Peter, in the most surprising manner, tip-toed gently to the door which communicated with the library and flung it suddenly open, in time to catch Mr. Pope kneeling on the hearthrug intently turning over the pages of the coveted volume, which lay as the owner had left it. He started to his feet in a flurried manner as the door opened.

"Do help yourself, Mr. Pope, won't you?" cried Lord Peter hospitably, and closed the door again.

"What is it, Uncle Peter?"

"If you want my advice, Gherkins, I should be rather careful how you had any dealings with Mr. Pope. I don't think he's telling the truth. He called those woodcuts engravings—though, of course, that may be just his ignorance. But I can't believe that he spent all his childhood's Sunday afternoons studying those maps and picking out the dragons in them, because, as you may have noticed for yourself, old Munster put very few dragons into his maps. They're mostly just plain maps—a bit queer to our ideas of geography, but perfectly straightforward. That was why I brought in the Cracow monster, and, you see, he thought it was some sort of dragon."

"Oh, I say, uncle! So you said that on purpose!"

"If Mr. Pope wants the *Cosmographia*, it's for some reason he doesn't want to tell us about. And, that being so, I wouldn't be in

too big a hurry to sell, if the book were mine. See?"

"Do you mean there's something frightfully valuable about the book, which we don't know?"

"Possibly."

"How exciting! It's just like a story in the *Boys' Friend Library*. What am I to say to him, uncle?"

"Well, in your place I wouldn't be dramatic or anything. I'd just say you've considered the matter, and you've taken a fancy to the book and have decided not to sell. You thank him for his offer, of course."

"Yes—er, won't you say it for me, uncle?"

"I think it would look better if you did it yourself."

"Yes, perhaps it would. Will he be very cross?"

"Possibly," said Lord Peter, "but if he is, he won't let on. Ready?"

The consulting committee accordingly returned to the library. Mr. Pope had prudently retired from the hearthrug and was examining a distant bookcase.

"Thank you very much for your offer, Mr. Pope," said the viscount, striding stoutly up to him, "but I have considered it, and I have taken a—a—a fancy for the book and decided not to sell."

"Sorry and all that," put in Lord Peter, "but my nephew's adamant about it. No, it isn't the price; he wants the book. Wish I could oblige you, but it isn't in my hands. Won't you take something else before you go? Really? Ring the bell, Gherkins. My man will see you to the lift. Good evening."

When the visitor had gone, Lord Peter returned and thoughtfully picked up the book.

"We were awful idiots to leave him with it, Gherkins, even for a moment. Luckily, there's no harm done."

"You don't think he found out anything while we were away, do you, uncle?" gasped Gherkins, open-eyed.

"I'm sure he didn't."

"Why?"

"He offered me fifty pounds for it on the way to the door. Gave the game away. H'm! Bunter."

"My lord?"

"Put this book in the safe and bring me back the keys. And you'd better set all the burglar alarms when you lock up."

"Oo—er!" said Viscount St. George.

* * *

On the third morning after the visit of Mr. Wilberforce Pope, the viscount was seated at a very late breakfast in his uncle's flat, after the most glorious and soul-satisfying night that ever boy experienced. He was almost too excited to eat the kidneys and bacon placed before him by Bunter, whose usual impeccable manner was not in the least impaired by a rapidly swelling and blackening eye.

It was about two in the morning that Gherkins—who had not slept very well, owing to too lavish and grown-up a dinner and theater the evening before—became aware of a stealthy sound somewhere in the direction of the fire escape. He had got out of bed and crept very softly into Lord Peter's room and woken him up. He had said: "Uncle Peter, I'm sure there's burglars on the fire escape." And Uncle Peter, instead of saying, "Nonsense, Gherkins, hurry up and get back to bed," had sat up and listened and said: "By Jove, Gherkins, I believe you're right." And had sent Gherkins to call Bunter. And on his return, Gherkins, who had always regarded his uncle as a very top-hatted sort of person, actually saw him take from his handkerchief drawer an undeniable automatic pistol.

It was at this point that Lord Peter was apotheosed from the state of Quite Decent Uncle to that of Glorified Uncle. He said:

"Look here, Gherkins, we don't know how many of these blighters there'll be, so you must be jolly smart and do anything I say sharp, on the word of command—even if I have to say 'Scoot.' Promise?"

Gherkins promised, with his heart thumping, and they sat waiting in the dark, till suddenly a little electric bell rang sharply just over the head of Lord Peter's bed and a green light shone out.

"The library window," said his lordship, promptly silencing the bell by turning a switch. "If they heard, they may think better of it. We'll give them a few minutes."

They gave them five minutes, and then crept very quietly down the passage.

"Go round by the dining room, Bunter," said his lordship; "they may bolt that way."

With infinite precaution, he unlocked and opened the library door, and Gherkins noticed how silently the locks moved.

A circle of light from an electric torch was moving slowly along the bookshelves. The burglars had obviously heard nothing of the counter-attack. Indeed, they seemed to have troubles enough of

their own to keep their attention occupied. As his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, Gherkins made out that one man was standing holding the torch, while the other took down and examined the books. It was fascinating to watch his apparently disembodied hands move along the shelves in the torchlight.

The men muttered discontentedly. Obviously the job was proving a harder one than they had bargained for. The habit of ancient authors of abbreviating the titles on the backs of their volumes, or leaving them completely untitled, made things extremely awkward. From time to time the man with the torch extended his hand into the light. It held a piece of paper, which they anxiously compared with the title page of a book. Then the volume was replaced and the tedious search went on.

Suddenly some slight noise—Gherkins was sure *he* did not make it; it may have been Bunter in the dining room—seemed to catch the ear of the kneeling man.

"Wot's that?" he gasped, and his startled face swung round into view.

"Hands up!" said Lord Peter, and switched the light on.

The second man made one leap for the dining room door, where a smash and an oath proclaimed that he had encountered Bunter. The kneeling man shot his hands up like a marionette.

"Gherkins," said Lord Peter; "do you think you can go across to the gentleman by the bookcase and relieve him of the article which is so inelegantly distending the right-hand pocket of his coat? Wait a minute. Don't on any account get between him and my pistol, and mind you take the thing out *very* carefully. There's no hurry. That's splendid. Just point it at the floor while you bring it across, would you? Thanks. Bunter has managed for himself, I see. Now run into my bedroom, and in the bottom of my wardrobe you will find a bundle of stout cord. Oh! I beg your pardon; yes, put your hands down by all means. It must be very tiring exercise."

The arms of the intruders being secured behind their backs with a neatness which Gherkins felt to be worthy of the best traditions of Sexton Blake, Lord Peter motioned his captives to sit down and dispatched Bunter for whisky and soda.

"Before we send for the police," said Lord Peter, "you would do me a great personal favor by telling me what you were looking for, and who sent you. Ah! thanks, Bunter. As our guests are not at liberty to use their hands, perhaps you would be kind enough

to assist them to a drink. Now then, say when."

"Well, you're a gentleman, guv'nor, said the First Burglar, wiping his mouth politely on his shoulder, the back of his hand not being available. "If we'd a known wot a job this was goin' ter be, blow me if we'd a touched it. The bloke said, ses 'e, 'It's takin' candy from a baby,' 'e ses. 'The gentleman's a reg'lar softie,' 'e ses, 'one o' these 'ere sersiety toffs wiv a maggot fer old books,' that's wot 'e ses, 'an' ef yer can find this 'ere old book fer me,' 'e ses, 'there's a pony fer yer.' Well! Sech a job! 'E didn't mention as 'ow there'd be five 'undred fousand bleedin' ole books all as alike as a regiment o' bleedin' dragoons. Nor as 'ow yer kept a nice little machine-gun like that 'andy by the bedside, *nor* yet as 'ow yer was so bleedin' good at tyin' knots in a bit o' string. No—'e didn't think ter mention them things."

"Deuced unsporting of him," said his lordship. "Do you happen to know the gentleman's name?"

"No—that was another o' them things wot 'e didn't mention. 'E's a stout, fair party, wiv 'orn rims to 'is goggles and a bald 'ead. One o' these 'ere philanthropists, I reckon. A friend o' mine, wot got inter trouble onct, got work froo 'im, and the gentleman comes round and ses to 'im, 'e ses, 'Could yer find me a couple o' lads ter do a little job?' 'e ses, an' my friend finkin' no 'arm, you see, guv'nor, but wot it might be a bit of a joke like, 'e gets 'old of my pal an' me, an' we meets the gentleman in a pub dahn Whitechapel way. Wich we was ter meet 'im there again Friday night, us 'avin' allowed that time fer ter git 'old of the book."

"The book being, if I may hazard a guess, the *Cosmographia Universalis*?"

"Sumfink like that, guv'nor. I got its jaw-breakin' name wrote down on a bit o' paper, wot my pal 'ad in 'is 'and. Wot did yer do wiv that 'ere bit o' paper, Bill?"

"Well, look here," said Lord Peter, "I'm afraid I must send for the police, but I think it likely, if you give us your assistance to get hold of your gentleman, whose name I strongly suspect to be Wilberforce Pope, that you will get off pretty easily. Telephone the police, Bunter, and then go and put something on that eye of yours. Gherkins, we'll give these gentlemen another drink, and then I think perhaps you'd better hop back to bed; the fun's over. No? Well, put a good thick coat on, there's a good fellow, because what your mother will say to me if you catch a cold I don't like to think."

So the police had come and taken the burglars away, and now Detective-Inspector Parker, of Scotland Yard, a great personal friend of Lord Peter's, sat toying with a cup of coffee and listening to the story.

"But what's the matter with the jolly old book, anyhow, to make it so popular?" he demanded.

"I don't know," replied Wimsey; "but after Mr. Pope's little visit the other day I got kind of intrigued about it and had a look through it. I've got a hunch it may turn out rather valuable, after all. Unsuspected beauties and all that sort of thing. If only Mr. Pope had been a trifle more accurate in his facts, he might have got away with something to which I feel pretty sure he isn't entitled. Anyway, when I'd seen—what I saw, I wrote off to Dr. Conyers of Yelsall Manor, the late owner—"

"Conyers, the cancer man?"

"Yes. He's done some pretty important research in his time, I fancy. Getting on now, though; about seventy-eight, I fancy. I hope he's more honest than his nephew, with one foot in the grave like that. Anyway, I wrote (with Gherkins's permission, naturally) to say we had the book and had been specially interested by something we found there, and would he be so obliging as to tell us something of its history. I also—"

"But what did you find in it?"

"I don't think we'll tell him yet, Gherkins, shall we? I like to keep policemen guessing. As I was saying, when you so rudely interrupted me, I also asked him whether he knew anything about his good nephew's offer to buy it back. His answer has just arrived. He says he knows of nothing specially interesting about the book. It has been in the library untold years, and the tearing out of the maps must have been done a long time ago by some family vandal. He can't think why his nephew should be so keen on it, as he certainly never pored over it as a boy. In fact, the old man declares the engaging Wilberforce has never even set foot in Yelsall Manor to his knowledge. So much for the fire-breathing monsters and the pleasant Sunday afternoons."

"Naughty Wilberforce!"

"M'm. Yes. So, after last night's little dust-up, I wired the old boy we were tooling down to Yelsall to have a heart-to-heart talk with him about his picture book and his nephew."

"Are you taking the book down with you?" asked Parker. "I can

give you a police escort for it if you like."

"That's not a bad idea," said Wimsey. "We don't know where the insinuating Mr. Pope may be hanging out, and I wouldn't put it past him to make another attempt."

"Better be on the safe side," said Parker. "I can't come myself, but I'll send down a couple of men with you."

"Good egg," said Lord Peter. "Call up your myrmidons. We'll get a car round at once. You're coming, Gherkins, I suppose? God knows what your mother would say. Don't ever be an uncle, Charles; it's frightfully difficult to be fair to all parties."

Yelsall Manor was one of those large, decaying country mansions which speak eloquently of times more spacious than our own. The original late Tudor construction had been masked by the addition of a wide frontage in the Italian manner, with a kind of classical portico surmounted by a pediment and approached by a semicircular flight of steps. The grounds had originally been laid out in that formal manner in which grove nods to grove and each half duly reflects the other. A late owner, however, had burst out into the more eccentric sort of landscape gardening which is associated with the name of Capability Brown. A Chinese pagoda, somewhat resembling Sir William Chambers's erection in Kew Gardens, but smaller, rose out of a grove of laurustinus towards the eastern extremity of the house, while at the rear appeared a large artificial lake, dotted with numerous islands, on which odd little temples, grottos, teahouses, and bridges peeped out from among clumps of shrubs, once ornamental, but now sadly overgrown. A boathouse, with wide eaves like the designs on a willow-pattern plate, stood at one corner, its landing-stage fallen into decay and wreathed with melancholy weeds.

"My disreputable old ancestor, Cuthbert Conyers, settled down here when he retired from the sea in 1732," said Dr. Conyers, smiling faintly. "His elder brother died childless, so the black sheep returned to the fold with the determination to become respectable and found a family. I fear he did not succeed altogether. There were very queer tales as to where his money came from. He is said to have been a pirate, and to have sailed with the notorious Captain Blackbeard. In the village, to this day, he is remembered and spoken of as Cut-throat Conyers. It used to make the old man very angry, and there is an unpleasant story of his slicing the ears off

a groom who had been heard to call him 'Old Cut-throat.' He was not an uncultivated person, though. It was he who did the landscape gardening round at the back, and he built the pagoda for his telescope. He was reputed to study the Black Art, and there were certainly a number of astrological works in the library with his name on the fly-leaf, but probably the telescope was only a remembrance of his seafaring days.

"Anyhow, towards the end of his life he became more and more odd and morose. He quarrelled with his family, and turned his younger son out of doors with his wife and children. An unpleasant old fellow.

"On his deathbed he was attended by the parson—a good, earnest, God-fearing sort of man, who must have put up with a deal of insult in carrying out what he firmly believed to be the sacred duty of reconciling the old man to this shamefully treated son. Eventually, 'Old Cut-throat' relented so far as to make a will, leaving to the younger son 'My treasure which I have buried in Munster.' The parson represented to him that it was useless to bequeath a treasure unless he also bequeathed the information where to find it, but the horrid old pirate only chuckled spitefully, and said that, as he had been at the pains to collect the treasure, his son might well be at the pains of looking for it. Further than that he would not go, and so he died, and I dare say went to a very bad place.

"Since then the family has died out, and I am the sole representative of the Conyerses, and heir to the treasure, whatever and wherever it is, for it was never discovered. I do not suppose it was very honestly come by, but since it would be useless now to try and find the original owners, I imagine I have a better right to it than anybody living.

"You may think it very unseemly, Lord Peter, that an old, lonely man like myself should be greedy for a hoard of pirate's gold. But my whole life has been devoted to studying the disease of cancer, and I believe myself to be very close to a solution of one part at least of the terrible problem. Research costs money, and my limited means are very nearly exhausted. The property is mortgaged up to the hilt, and I do most urgently desire to complete my experiments before I die, and to leave a sufficient sum to found a clinic where the work can be carried on.

"During the last year I have made very great efforts to solve the

mystery of 'Old Cut-throat's' treasure. I have been able to leave much of my experimental work in the most capable hands of my assistant, Dr. Forbes, while I pursued my researches with the very slender clue I had to go upon. It was the more expensive and difficult that Cuthbert had left no indication in his will whether Münster in Germany or Munster in Ireland was the hiding-place of the treasure. My journeys and my search in both places cost money and brought me no further on my quest. I returned, disheartened, in August, and found myself obliged to sell my library, in order to defray my expenses and obtain a little money with which to struggle on with my sadly delayed experiments."

"Ah!" said Lord Peter. "I begin to see light."

The old physician looked at him inquiringly. They had finished tea, and were seated around the great fireplace in the study. Lord Peter's interested questions about the beautiful, dilapidated old house and estate had led the conversation naturally to Dr. Conyers's family, shelving for the time the problem of the *Cosmographia*, which lay on a table beside them.

"Everything you say fits into the puzzle," went on Wimsey, "and I think there's not the smallest doubt what Mr. Wilberforce Pope was after, though how he knew that you had the *Cosmographia* here I couldn't say."

"When I disposed of the library, I sent him a catalogue," said Dr. Conyers. "As a relative, I thought he ought to have the right to buy anything he fancied. I can't think why he didn't secure the book then, instead of behaving in this most shocking fashion."

Lord Peter hooted with laughter.

"Why, because he never tumbled to it till afterwards," he said. "And oh dear, how wild he must have been! I forgive him everything. Although," he added, "I don't want to raise your hopes too high, sir, for, even when we've solved old Cuthbert's riddle, I don't know that we're very much nearer to the treasure."

"To the treasure?"

"Well, now, sir. I want you first to look at this page, where there's a name scrawled in the margin. Our ancestors had an untidy way of signing their possessions higgledy-piggledy in margins instead of in a decent, Christian way in the fly-leaf. This is a handwriting of somewhere about Charles I's reign: 'Jac: Coniers.' I take it that goes to prove that the book was in the possession of your family at any rate as early as the first half of the seventeenth century,

and has remained there ever since. Right, now we turn to page 1099, where we find a description of the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. It's headed, you see, by a kind of map, with some of Mr. Pope's monsters swimming about in it, and apparently representing the Canaries, or, as they used to be called, the Fortunate Isles. It doesn't look much more accurate than old maps usually are, but I take it the big island on the right is meant for Lanzarote, and the two nearest to it may be Teneriffe and Gran Canaria."

"But what's that writing in the middle?"

"That's just the point. The writing is later than 'Jac: Coniers's' signature; I should put it about 1700—but, of course, it may have been written a good deal later still. I mean, a man who was elderly in 1730 would still use the style of writing he adopted as a young man, especially if, like your ancestor the pirate, he had spent the early part of his life in outdoor pursuits and hadn't done much writing."

"Do you mean to say, Uncle Peter," broke in the viscount excitedly, "that that's 'Old Cut-throat's' writing?"

"I'd be ready to lay a sporting bet it is. Look here, sir, you've been scouring round Münster in Germany and Munster in Ireland—but how about good old Sebastian Munster here in the library at home?"

"God bless my soul! Is it possible?"

"It's pretty nearly certain, sir. Here's what he says, written, you see, round the head of that sort of sea-dragon:

Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo Sol.

Here the sun shines perpetually upon the Dragon's Head.

Rather doggy Latin—sea-dog Latin, you might say, in fact."

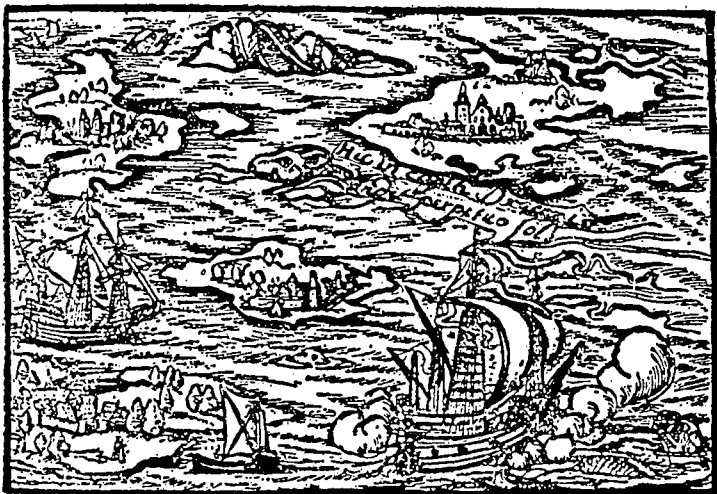
"I'm afraid," said Dr. Conyers, "I must be very stupid, but I can't see where that leads us."

"No: 'Old Cut-throat' was rather clever. No doubt he thought that, if anybody read it, they'd think it was just an allusion to where it says, further down, that 'the islands were called *Fortunatae* because of the wonderful temperature of the air and the clemency of the skies.' But the cunning old astrologer up in his pagoda had a meaning of his own. Here's a little book published in 1678—Middleton's *Practical Astrology*—just the sort of popular handbook an amateur like 'Old Cut-throat' would use. Here you

are: 'If in your figure you find Jupiter or Venus or *Dragon's head*, you may be confident there is Treasure in the place supposed. . . . If you find *Sol* to be the significator of the hidden Treasure, you may conclude there is Gold, or some jewels.' You know, sir, I think we may conclude it."

THE DRAGON'S HEAD

Liber V.
DE NOVIS INSVLIS. 1099
quomodo, quando, & per quem
illæ inuenta sint.



Christophorus Columbus natione Genuensis, cum diu in aula regis Hispaniarum deversatus fuisset, animum induxit, ut hactenus inaccessas orbis partes peragraret. Perit inuenta circa aëre ut uox suo non decesset, futuris hiis & tunc his.

"Dear me!" said Dr. Conyers. "I believe, indeed, you must be right. And I am ashamed to think that if anybody had suggested to me that it could ever be profitable to me to learn the terms of astrology, I should have replied in my vanity that my time was too valuable to waste on such foolishness. I am deeply indebted to you."

"Yes," said Gherkins, "but where is the treasure, uncle?"

"That's just it," said Lord Peter. "The map is very vague; there is no latitude or longitude given; and the directions, such as they are, seem not even to refer to any spot on the islands, but to some place in the middle of the sea. Besides, it is nearly two hundred years since the treasure was hidden, and it may already have been found by somebody or other."

Dr. Conyers stood up.

"I am an old man," he said, "but I still have some strength. If I can by any means get together the money for an expedition, I will not rest till I have made every possible effort to find the treasure and to endow my clinic."

"Then, sir, I hope you'll let me give a hand to the good work," said Lord Peter.

Dr. Conyers had invited his guests to stay the night, and, after the excited viscount had been packed off to bed, Wimsey and the old man sat late, consulting maps and diligently reading Munster's chapter "*De Novis Insulis*," in the hope of discovering some further clue. At length, however, they separated, and Lord Peter went upstairs, the book under his arm. He was restless, however, and, instead of going to bed, sat for a long time at his window, which looked out upon the lake. The moon, a few days past the full, was riding high among small, windy clouds, and picked out the sharp eaves of the Chinese teahouses and the straggling tops of the unpruned shrubs. "Old Cut-Throat" and his landscape gardening! Wimsey could have fancied that the old pirate was sitting now beside his telescope in the preposterous pagoda, chuckling over his riddling testament and counting the craters of the moon. "If *Luna*, there is silver." The water of the lake was silver enough; there was a great smooth path across it, broken by the sinister wedge of the boathouse, the black shadows of the islands, and, almost in the middle of the lake, a decayed fountain, a writhing Celestial dragon-shape, spiny-backed and ridiculous.

Wimsey rubbed his eyes. There was something strangely familiar about the lake; from moment to moment it assumed the queer unreality of a place which one recognizes without having ever known it. It was like one's first sight of the Leaning Tower of Pisa—too like its picture to be quite believable. Surely, thought Wimsey, he knew that elongated island on the right, shaped rather

like a winged monster, with its two little clumps of buildings. And the island to the left of it, like the British Isles, but warped out of shape. And the third island, between the others, and nearer. The three formed a triangle, with the Chinese fountain in the center; the moon shining steadily upon its dragon head. *Hic in capite draconis ardet perpetuo*—

Lord Peter sprang up with a loud exclamation, and flung open the door into the dressing-room. A small figure wrapped in an eiderdown hurriedly uncoiled itself from the window seat.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Peter," said Gherkins. "I was so *dreadfully* wide awake, it wasn't any good staying in bed."

"Come here," said Lord Peter, "and tell me if I'm mad or dreaming. Look out of the window and compare it with the map—Old Cut-throat's 'New Islands.' He made 'em, Gherkins; he put 'em here. Aren't they laid out just like the Canaries? Those three islands in a triangle, and the fourth down here in the corner? And the boathouse where the big ship is in the picture? And the dragon fountain where the dragon's head is? Well, my son, that's where your hidden treasure's gone to. Get your things on, Gherkins, and damn the time when all good little boys should be in bed! We're going for a row on the lake, if there's a tub in that boathouse that'll float."

"Oh, Uncle Peter! This is a *real* adventure!"

"All right," said Wimsey. "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest, and all that! Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of Johnny Walker! Pirate expedition fitted out in dead of night to seek hidden treasure and explore the Fortunate Isles! Come on, crew!"

Lord Peter hitched the leaky dinghy to the dragon's knobbly tail and climbed out carefully, for the base of the fountain was green and weedy.

"I'm afraid it's your job to sit there and bail, Gherkins," he said. "All the best captains bag the really interesting jobs for themselves. We'd better start with the head. If the old blighter said head, he probably meant it." He passed an arm affectionately round the creature's neck for support, while he methodically pressed and pulled the various knobs and bumps of its anatomy. "It seems beastly solid, but I'm sure there's a spring somewhere. You won't forget to bail, will you? I'd simply hate to turn round and find the boat gone. Pirate chief marooned on island and all that. Well, it

isn't its back hair, anyhow. We'll try its eyes. I say, Gherkins, I'm sure I felt something move, only it's frightfully stiff. We might have thought to bring some oil. Never mind; it's dogged as does it. It's coming. It's coming. Booh! Pah!"

A fierce effort thrust the rusted knob inwards, releasing a huge spout of water into his face from the dragon's gaping throat. The fountain, dry for many years, soared rejoicingly heavenwards, drenching the treasure-hunters, and making rainbows in the moonlight.

"I suppose this is 'Old Cut-throat's' idea of humor," grumbled Wimsey, retreating cautiously round the dragon's neck. "And now I can't turn it off again. Well, dash it all, let's try the other eye."

He pressed for a few moments in vain. Then, with a grinding clang, the bronze wings of the monster clapped down to its sides, revealing a deep square hole, and the fountain ceased to play.

"Gherkins!" said Lord Peter, "we've done it. (But don't neglect bailing on that account!) There's a box here. And it's beastly heavy. No; all right, I can manage. Gimme the boat-hook. Now I do hope the old sinner really did have a treasure. What a bore if it's only one of his little jokes. Never mind—hold the boat steady. There. Always remember, Gherkins, that you can make quite an effective crane with a boat-hook and a stout pair of braces. Got it? That's right. Now for home and beauty. . . . Hullo! what's all that?"

As he paddled the boat round, it was evident that something was happening down by the boathouse. Lights were moving about, and a sound of voices came across the lake.

"They think we're burglars, Gherkins. Always misunderstood. Give way, my hearties—

"A-roving, a-roving, since roving's been my ru-i-in,
I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid."

"Is that you, my lord?" said a man's voice as they drew in to the boathouse.

"Why, it's our faithful sleuths!" cried his lordship. "What's the excitement?"

"We found this fellow sneaking round the boathouse," said the man from Scotland Yard. "He says he's the old gentleman's nephew. Do you know him, my lord?"

"I rather fancy I do," said Wimsey. "Mr. Pope, I think. Good

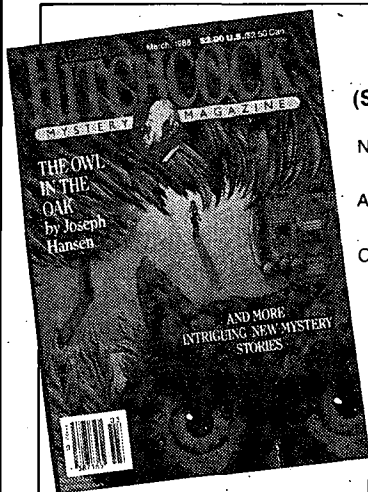
evening. Were you looking for anything? Not a treasure, by any chance? Because we've just found one. Oh! don't say that. *Maxima reverentia*, you know. Lord St. George is of tender years. And, by the way, thank you so much for sending your delightful friends to call on me last night. Oh, yes, Thompson, I'll charge him all right. You there, doctor? Splendid. Now, if anybody's got a spanner or anything handy, we'll have a look at Great-grandpapa Cuthbert. And if he turns out to be old iron, Mr. Pope, you'll have had an uncommonly good joke for your money."

An iron bar was produced from the boathouse and thrust under the hasp of the chest. It creaked and burst. Dr. Conyers knelt down tremulously and threw open the lid.

There was a little pause.

"The drinks are on you, Mr. Pope," said Lord Peter. "I think, doctor, it ought to be a jolly good hospital when it's finished."

A special offer for mystery fans...



**8 issues of Alfred Hitchcock
for only \$11.97**

(Save 25% off the regular newsstand price)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Mail to:
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
P.O. Box 1932
Marion, OH 43305

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

For Immediate Subscription Service Call
TOLL FREE 1-800-247-2160 (in IOWA
1-800-362-2860).

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for your first issue.

Outside US and Poss. \$13.97 (cash with order US funds).

DHD 8H-1

(continued from page 8)

front bedroom. They also took the blender although they wouldn't be mixing drinks.

One of the mob didn't like steak, for one can of meatballs and gravy was missing. To open that can, he also took the electric can opener. It was probably that one who also didn't like beer, and took a half-empty jar of instant tea.

For entertainment they got the bedside clock radio, not battery operated. Had they tried the radio first, they would have found the speakers shot and the sound terrible. The excellent little portable radio was sitting in plain sight on the end table in the front room. The color TV was also there, as was a good stereo set. . . .

Perhaps they work their way back and forth across the country in this fashion, much like hoboes of old but with more discriminating tastes. Who knows?

Caryl Denning
Dallas, Texas

The Goldilocks-style mystery . . . brought back memories of the time my friend forgot one of the suitcases containing her sons' clothes. She said that not having to wash a heap of clothes upon return from a vacation was a blessing. There was no question of what the two boys would be wearing each

day—it was washed the night before and hanging on the line ready for the next day.

This gave me my solution to the mystery in the weekend house. I think probably the same thing happened when a camping family went on vacation. One of the children, probably a twelve-year old son, was told to put the two cardboard boxes containing the week's supplies for their camping trip into the station wagon. However, a TV program was on and filled the ears of the lad with more "important" sounds. While en route to the camping grounds, the young son discovered the missing boxes. Not wanting to get in trouble with his parents, he asked his little brother to join him on a "scavenger hunt" to get the missing items replaced upon their arrival at the camping grounds. With weekend houses nearby, it would seem an easy matter to get the items from one of the houses.

The two boys no sooner arrived at the camping grounds when they told their parents they wanted to "discover the beach." Instead, the boys looked into the windows of the houses that looked unoccupied. With dust cloths over the furniture, your friends' weekend house looked like the most probable place to find the items to fill the boxes left behind at home. Luckily, empty boxes were found

in the nearby garage. They'd have the two boxes filled with the things missing in no time.

Drinking beer and smoking weren't allowed in their lives at their young age. With no one around, the weekend house was an ideal place to "break some of the parental rules" and pass the time away while their wash was being done. Somehow or other, the pasta sauce got in the way of the younger boy's elbow in his endeavor to get at the canned food. It fell to the floor, splashing both boys with ugly stains. The towels used to wipe up the mess would have to be washed. Paper towels would be used to pick up the messy glass pieces. After all, if the people were nice enough to help them replenish their camping supplies, the least the boys could do would be to wash everything they dirtied—besides their stained clothes.

The boys returned to their campgrounds with the two boxes of camping items "borrowed" from the nearby weekend house. When their mother unpacked the items, she felt she must be getting forgetful—or maybe even senile. She didn't remember packing all these different items, but then maybe her husband put in a few things at the last minute. After all, he always said his wife never brought enough food or camping items for a week. This time there cer-

tainly would be enough of everything — there was no question about running out of food on this camping trip!

Mary Ann Likvan
Niles, Illinois

May I suggest an answer to your mystery:

1. Someone who had watched the house and saw the hidden key being put away and knew when all were gone.

2. Someone giving you food for thought. "Who was it?" (I can just hear them saying now, "That will keep them guessing for a while.")

3. People who are hiding out in the nearby area on the run.

The following may be the reasons . . . *Soap, SOS pads, etc.*: Liquid detergent, SOS pads, Clorox can be used for home-made bombs. Razor blades, shaving soap can be used to cut and clean wounds. *Plastic garbage bags, paper towels, etc.*: . . . Garbage bags equal instant rain gear, catching moisture; laid out flat at night, you can lick off early morning dew. . . . *Beer and cheap wine*: used for cheap cleaning of wounds. *Canned goods, frozen food*: . . . Empty cans can be used for anything from drinking cups to traps to cooking pans. Both types of food can be used as bait to catch animals and fish. *Unopened pasta*: Can

be stored, used as fish bait, as a trail marker. *Coffee*: Coffee poultice can be used for swellings. . . . *Bacon drippings*: Can be used to grease traps and guns. *Bath towels*: Heavier than sheets. Give more warmth and more useful for stopping blood. *The . . . odor of smoke*: Cigarette butts, if left behind, can produce . . . fingerprints.

Barbara Marshall
San Pedro, California

(Ms. Marshall offered less crime-oriented suggestions regarding other items, but the above, we thought, were both interesting and unusual.—ED.)

It is obvious that the weekend house was entered by four persons: Mr. and Mrs. Clean, daughter Spic and son Span. Mr. C needs no key. Like magic, this fellow shows up anywhere, any time, and what's wrong with his bringing along his family?

While the parents were busy washing the clothing, the kids apparently fought over the pasta sauce, breaking the bottle, which they cleaned up and hid under the deck in order to avoid a spanking. And while the children were outside, Mom and Pop gulped a few beers and smoked a couple of cigarettes, then dropped the butts in the empty beer cans and tossed

them out a side window.

Being between commercials, and with their checks still in the mail, the poor family felt compelled to "borrow" a meager supply of staples, vowing to come back one day and reimburse the house owner; the bacon drippings and the batteries were undoubtedly utilized to grease and spark their jalopy, thereby affording them a Clean getaway.

John Large
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The characters in this little drama number four. A male of about forty-five to fifty with a possible prison record. His younger female companion about eighteen or nineteen, possibly his wife, and none too bright. A preteen male (the size 12 briefs), and the couple's infant daughter, approximately fourteen months. Part of the laundry that used so much bleach was for diapers and baby items. The child would be just old enough to hold a coffee cup, but not a mug. Her mother wants things to match, so they take the cups sufficient for their needs. The male drinks beer, the female wine. Both are from a social class that wouldn't like fine wine if they tasted it. The man probably eschews hard liquor because of his age, and/or its effect on him. The boy is the

man's son from a previous marriage whom they have just snatched from the custodial parent; hence the necessity for isolation and the need to be away from prying questions or the notice of anyone in a motel or campground.

They are probably traveling in some type of covered vehicle such as a pickup with camper. The need for baths and laundry caused them to stop where they did. Since they would regard paper products as replaceable and of little value to such obviously wealthy people, they felt no guilt at taking those items for their own use. To remove any valuables would cause the police to be after them. They took items they intended to use while they relocated where no one will recognize the boy. The boy accidentally broke the jar of sauce, and as punishment they forbade him to eat any of the muffins. He ate them anyway while they were busy with baths or laundry and stuffed the box back in the fridge to hide his crime.

Marilyn J. Collier
North Bend, Washington

THE THIRD HOUSE ON THE RIGHT

The letter was addressed to Captain Irvin, Twenty-fourth Precinct, NYPD. It read:

Dear Pigs:

Here is the key to the blue house, third on the right on Mountaindale Road, out of Wurtsboro. The body, which I done in, is in the den. You'll never catch me.

The Perpetrator.

This, to Captain Irvin, was a job for the special homicide squad—Marlowe, Mongo, Cannon, and Colombo.

"Get this SOB," Irvin said. "Nobody tells us we ain't gonna catch him."

Cannon spoke to Marlowe. "Must we take Mongo, the midget?"

"He ain't a midget, Cannon, he's a dwarf. Anyway, we may get bored and want to play catch with him."

"Do you mean . . . play catch with him or . . . play catch with him?"

"Right."

The third house on the right on Mountaindale Road out of Mountaindale is not the same as the third house on the right on Mountaindale Road out of Wurtsboro, but that distinction did not seem to occur to Colombo, who was driving the foursome in his car.

"Cannon, would you mind sitting in the center of the back seat—my car is listing."

"If I do that, sergeant, I'll crush Mongo."

"Crush Mongo . . . is that a new drink?" Marlowe asked.

"Ugh," said Mongo as he was pushed against the door. "Does anyone have the key to this house that we're going to?"

"I do," said Colombo. "It's here someplace in my raincoat pocket."

The key, naturally, did not fit the lock, but Mongo had his lockpick set, so while Cannon held him up Mongo picked the lock.

"A miraculous maneuver, Mongo," Cannon said as he dropped Mongo and entered the house.

"The first thing we've got to do," Marlowe said as he lit a cigarette, "is to find some clues."

"Why don't we look at the body first?" Mongo said as he got up, dusted himself off, and entered the house.

Colombo came in from the den. "There is nobody . . ."

"No body?" Marlowe asked as he flipped his cigarette into the back of the fireplace.

"Nobody home," Colombo said, "and no body."

"Let's look for the body," Mongo said.

"Why are you frisking the fridge, Philip?"

"Looking for a clue, Cannon," Marlowe said as he lit a cigarette. "Here, have a blueberry muffin."

"Don't touch those," said Colombo. "They may be covered with fingerprints. Here, put them in this plastic bag. The box we don't need . . . put it back."

"Oh, good," Marlowe said as he lit a cigarette. "I love fingerprints."

"I have some bags left over," Colombo said. "Let's fill 'em with some of the frozen food and canned goods and use them for ballast against Cannon on the trip back."

"I'm gonna grab a shower," Colombo said. "I'm covered with blueberry stains."

"Me too," said Cannon.

"Me too," said Marlowe as he lit a cigarette.

"Me too," said Mongo, but by then all the bathrooms were taken so he grabbed a box of pasta and several beers and headed for the utility room and the clothes washer.

"Wow, this'll be great," he said, "just like a Teheran Jacuzzi." He put in some soap, left his clothes on, hopped in, lowered the lid, and agitated himself for two cycles. When he came out, he threw his clothes in the dryer and sat naked as he drank the beer and ate the pasta. When his clothes were dry, he couldn't find his shorts, so he dressed without them and threw the empty beer cans out the window. While he was

dressing, Colombo and Marlowe came in in their underwear and washed and dried their clothes. Colombo threw in some hiking clothes he had found upstairs.

"I feel better," Marlowe said as he lit a cigarette, "but it took me four toothbrushes to get the blue stains out of my fingernails. What's in the plastic bag, Colombo?"

"I made up a little traveling kit after I scoured with some SOS pads—you know, razor blades, soap, etc., etc., Kleenex, toilet paper, etc., etc. . . . saves going to the Seven-Eleven."

Cannon came downstairs with a towel over his still wet hair—what there was of it. He was drying his hair with one hand while he juggled four flashlight batteries in his other hand. "For my talking Barbie doll," he explained to the others.

Colombo said, "I guess we might as well scram. The body seems to have disappeared. We'll write it up as a kidnapping—that'll take it out of the hands of us Homicide guys."

Cannon came out of the kitchen with a cup of coffee, and when Marlowe, who had lost his shoes in the dryer, saw this, he lit a cigarette and headed for the kitchen to get himself a cup.

"Be careful, Phil. I broke a jar

of pasta sauce in there."

"Here, put on these boots I found with the hiking stuff," Colombo said.

"Not to worry," Cannon said. "I took care of the broken glass. What . . . you think I'm a slob?"

"I agree with Colombo," Mongo said. "Let's get out of here. No corpus delicti . . . therefore, no el crimen."

"Hey," Marlowe said as he wadded his empty cigarette package and dropped it into a tall, empty vase, "let's take along some of this wine, we'll drink it in our coffee cups. What kind do you like, Colombo? We got Dom Perignon, some 1937 La Tour, and a jug of Cribari."

"Take the jug, it's the biggest and probably the best," Colombo said.

About a mile from the house, on the road back, Marlowe raised up his hands and said, "Hey, wait up, wait up, we forgot the can of bacon grease."

"My God, you're right," said Cannon.

"Hey, yeah," Colombo said as he turned the car around and headed back.

Mongo didn't have the faintest idea why they would possibly want the can of bacon drippings, but he wasn't about to reveal his ignorance by asking.

Jack H. Cornwell
Goshen, New York

* * *
Your real-life mystery? No mystery at all!

The "neater-than-Goldilocks" intruders were none other than *right-wing Christian survivalists*.

The locale is right. The items purloined were all (or almost all) non-perishable hygiene items essential to daily living; batteries for lights and small radios; unopened, storeable foods. Of course, things like TV's, stereos, and cameras would be of little use to persons expecting the imminent destruction of modern civilization.

As to their neatness, well, "cleanliness is next to Godliness," as they say!

Brendan Healy
Orange, New Jersey

Your friends' real-life mystery fascinates me. I can't figure out all of it, but a few points seem downright obvious to me.

The flashlight-batteries-but-not-flashlights: they needed the batteries to operate something else.

Coffee and cups: they were coffee drinkers, like cups better than mugs, but do not use saucers. (I don't—I have a small heavy ashtray and my cup-base just fits into its circular depression.)

Bacon drippings: I like to use

it for seasoning in foods. Too, dogs eat food better with a little bacon drippings mixed in.

Cheap wine and beer: they *like* that wine and beer. I'd take Mogen David in preference to most expensive dry wines or liquor.

Cheap stuff rather than expensive, and leaving everything in such good order: the victims and authorities wouldn't try as hard to find the thieves (except from curiosity).

Four cups and toothbrushes: I'd be willing to bet there were *not* four thieves, that this was a red herring. In fact, I'd guess there were two, a beer-drinking man and a wine-drinking woman who wears boys' underwear.

Three blueberry muffins: the woman ate one, and the man, with a bigger appetite, ate two.

Assuming that the theft was on the level, my guess is that they came up to a nearby cabin, assuming it was provisioned and had utilities on, discovered not, didn't want to go clear back to town to shop that late in the day (probably on a weekday), so "borrowed" from the first place they could enter easily, possibly returning several times. Did any other cabin owners report finding cups, etc.?

However, I have a stronger suspicion that this was a practical joke, designed to puzzle. How about other friends and

relatives—any pranksters among them who knew where the key was hidden?

Fran Priddy
Pana, Illinois

MUD

"Pull up, pull up!"

Splatt! Squelch . . .

"Brilliant, Chipper. That's got to be the only stretch of mud for ten miles and you plow right into it. Some pilot you are!"

"And just who was it who insisted on flying low so he could see everything?"

"Never mind that now; help me drag this thing out of the bog."

Half an hour later . . .

"Well, at least it's still in one piece, Hap."

"Yeah, but it's a real mess. You know how shiny the boss keeps it. He's really going to be ticked when we come back without the supplies *and* covered with mud. All because *you* had to go joyriding!"

"It was your idea too! Anyway, didn't we pass over a cabin right before we crashed? There should be some cleaning supplies there; enough to take the mud off a sleigh and eight reindeer anyway. There may even be some of the stuff we were supposed to get. We can pay the owners back when we get our Christmas bonus."

"Oh, all right."

Tethering Rudolph to a tree, the two elves headed off towards the nearby cottage . . .

Kay Shapero
Los Angeles, California

Thanks to everyone for writing (our friends are taking all your excellent suggestions under advisement). The local police should have enough leads now to keep them very busy. If the mystery is ever actually cracked, we'll let you know. No reward has yet been offered—but we plan to speak to our friends about that right away.





READER SERVICES

MOVING?

Please give us four to six weeks' notice of a change of address. Please check the appropriate box.

Even if you have notified the post office about your change of address, please fill out and mail this form to us to ensure accurate delivery of your magazine.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION OR RENEWAL?

Twelve issues of **ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S** Mystery Magazine for only \$16.97. Please check the appropriate box.

UNLISTING SERVICE?

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S Mystery Magazine makes available to other quality publications and carefully screened companies the names of its subscribers. If, however, you do not wish to have your name made available, please check the appropriate box.

- ☐ New Subscription
- ☐ Renewal
- ☐ Payment enclosed
- ☐ Bill me later

- ☐ Change of address; please note new address
- ☐ Please do not make my name and address available to other publications or companies.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

APT NO _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

Attach mailing label here and send to:

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

Mystery Magazine

Box 1932 • Marion, OH 43305

BOOKED & PRINTED

by Mary Cannon

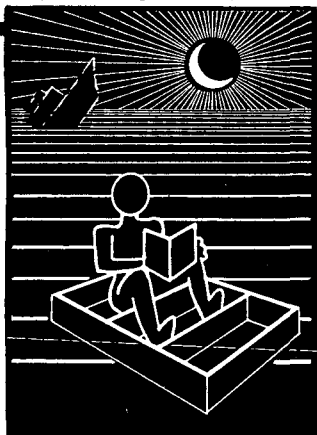


Illustration by Jim Gulsen

Reginald Hill fans may not yet have learned that some of the British author's earlier novels are being reprinted under the pseudonym the author then used. **The Castle of the Demon**, one of those suspense novels published under the name Patrick Ruell (Foul Play Press, \$4.95, 185 pp.), deftly blends an independent heroine's misadventures, a clannish coastal village, treasonous misdeeds, local superstitions—and a dash of romance. It's a heady brew.

H. Edward Hunsburger's **Death Signs** (Walker, \$15.95, 153 pp.) introduces two appealing characters in this Minneapolis murder case involving members of the deaf community. Mattie Shayne, who works in the public school system with the deaf, is rushed to the bedside of a deaf stabbing victim to "hear" his dying words. Police lieutenant Ryder, the homicide investigator, rather reluctantly requests that Mattie accompany him in the early stages of the case: she can translate his questions to the victim's deaf wife and friends, and she can read their sign-language responses and relay their answers to him. As Ryder becomes more convinced that the killing was not a random mugging, he becomes more concerned for Mattie's safety—and more attracted to Mattie herself. Suspense builds quickly to a memorable conclusion. Mattie and Ryder make a great detecting team; I hope we see them again.

Rafferty's Rules is a recent P.I. novel by W. Glenn Duncan

(Fawcett, \$2.95, 197 pp.). It's also the way Rafferty—former cop, Dallas denizen—explains his very personal, very strict code of moral choices. So when the parents of a wealthy girl hire Rafferty to avenge them against the bikers who brutalized their daughter, Rafferty pulls out one of his rules: he never kills for hire. He is, on the other hand, shocked to see what has become of the college coed, so he sets about to do what he can do. There's lots of brutality and naked violence in this tale of white slavery. There's also Rafferty's almost winsome narrative voice to lighten the tone: "I grinned at her, using my disarming smile. Hilda claimed it was more oafish than disarming, but I kept practicing. Everyone needs a hobby." If you like them hardboiled and smart-alecky; you may have found yourself another favorite author.

John M. Ford's **The Scholars of the Night** (St. Martin's Press, \$16.95, 288 pp.) takes its title from the civilian members of our country's "brain trust," the experts—often academics—who are occasionally called on to do a special job for the professional intelligence community. Nicholas Hansard is such a man, a solitary, brilliant professor and gamesman, a protege of the celebrated Dr. Berenson, Hansard's mentor and friend. This is one of those labyrinthine Cold War tales of treason and political idealism, of betrayal and bloodshed, of passion and cold-blooded manipulation. Ford pulls the reader deeper and deeper into the plot twists—the discovery of a "new" Christopher Marlowe manuscript, the theft of a vital piece of Star Wars technology, the budding romance between a lonely professor and his dead friend's lover—until the final bend in the road, when the big game plan is shockingly revealed.

On an entirely different note is Julie Smith's new Paul McDonald mystery, **Huckleberry Fiend** (Mysterious Press, \$15.95, 216 pp.). Paul is a mystery writer and former reporter who has just moved into a duplex with his significant other, the artist Sardis. (Sardis lives upstairs; Paul, downstairs.) The caper centers around what appears to be the authentic manuscript version of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. Booker, a friend and almost-reformed burglar, has lifted it from the closet of a stewardess, and he wants Paul to find the rightful owner. Then the stewardess is murdered—and thus begins Paul's adventure, which at times reads like the plot of a nineteenth-century melodrama.

Another P.I. novel worth your perusal is Doug Hornig's **The Dark Side** (Mysterious Press, \$3.95, 244 pp.). The background to this corporate-initiated investigation is the fascination here, for

the makers of a carbon monoxide warning device hire private eye Loren Swift to go to Babel, a holdover from the sixties, a commune dedicated to self-sufficiency. There one of the group's scientific leaders has died because the safety device failed to warn him of a gas leak. The man's widow is suing for ten million dollars, and she makes no secret of her intention to leave the small community as soon as she has her settlement money. But hers is just one of a number of healthy motives various community members had to do away with the victim. Swift is smart, softboiled, open-minded, and pretty serious about his work, and his interest in the close-knit bonds of a commune, how relationships can become dangerously twisted or neurotically dependent, adds an extra dimension to a well-turned plot. I'd recommend this one to Stephen Greenleaf fans.

Aaron Elkins has an engaging protagonist/detective in Professor Gideon Oliver, also known as America's "skeleton detective," and his latest case—**Old Bones** (Mysterious Press, \$15.95, 197 pp.)—should please fans and garner him new readers as well. The tale opens with a chilling scene: an old man, apparently collecting seashells, suddenly realizes that he's dallied too long on the flat beach at Mont St. Michel Bay. To the horror of the hotel guests watching from a distant balcony, he is unable to outrun the incoming tide. Thus is Guillaume du Rocher dead, just as he's called a family conference, too. And just before the plumbers unearth a long-buried skeleton in the basement of the manor house. Oliver has been lecturing at an international pathology convention nearby, and the authorities ask him to examine the old skeleton. This puts him in the center of the gathering, and at the heart of a cleverly-plotted murder mystery. Fans of classic puzzlers should appreciate Elkins' colorful characters, his word-paintings of strange locales, and his nifty plots.

DID YOU MISS ANY OF THESE CLASSIC ALFRED HITCHCOCK ANTHOLOGIES?

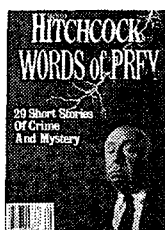


A MYSTERY BY THE TALE

Twenty-eight great tales that will thrill, chill, divert, beguile, pique, enthrall, entertain, absorb, intrigue, galvanize, disquiet, startle, titillate, provoke, electrify, stimulate, excite, arrest, engage, deceive, seize, mystify and baffle you.

WORDS OF PREY

They are hunters...or hunted! Often the hunters are the hunted. They exist in different times and places, from feudal Japan to our Midwest. The internal and external landscapes of their quests—vivid, subtle, disturbing or humorous—create a myriad of unforgettable experiences.



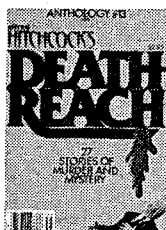
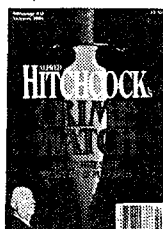
GRAVE SUSPICIONS

Murder lurks in a grave plot... 28 intricately woven tales of suspense in this classic anthology. Unravel the secrets and discover the suspicions in 347 puzzling pages.



CRIME WATCH

The best mystery stories center on clues, and in this anthology unusual clues abound. Each of the 25 stories centers on an intriguing key to an unusual situation. Keys such as a pigpen, the morning paper and a pair of dancing slippers all have their role to play in this compelling collection.



DEATHREACH

Twenty-seven stories of death and revenge, each one more frightening than the last. A chilling collection by Donald Honig, James Cross, Stanley Abbott, Edward Hoch, Richard Hardwick and more.

ANTHOLOGY #9

352 pages of the very best mystery, intrigue and devilish humor all with that special Hitchcock twist. Twenty-four hair-raising stories from Jack Ritchie, John Lutz, Donald Olson, Bill Pronzini and others.



Please send me the ALFRED HITCHCOCK anthologies indicated. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$_____.

Mail to: **ALFRED HITCHCOCK ANTHOLOGIES**
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ 07462

FEATURED

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> #22 A MYSTERY BY THE TALE | (\$4.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> #21 WORDS OF PREY | (\$4.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> #19 GRAVE SUSPICIONS | (\$3.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> #18 CRIME WATCH | (\$3.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> #13 DEATHREACH | (\$3.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANTHOLOGY #9 | (\$3.50) |

ALSO AVAILABLE

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> #17 MORTAL ERRORS | (\$3.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANTHOLOGY #11 | (\$3.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANTHOLOGY #8 | (\$3.50) |

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery. Available only in the U.S.

LICENSED BY C.O.U.S. ORG

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DHD8BA

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE/ZIP _____

MURDER BY DIRECTION

by Peter Shaw



Of the demand for British made-for-TV mystery series there is no end: we can never have enough of Conan Doyle, the contemporaries of Conan Doyle, Josephine Tey, Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, or anyone else whose stories require the filming of vintage Rolls Royces. Alert to our needs, the Arts and Entertainment Cable TV network has installed its own British-made mystery series, but with a difference. Its offerings include contemporary stories written expressly for television. One of these, **Dead Head**, runs in four parts starting April 30th.

Eddie Cass is a small-time criminal who undertakes what looks like a routine delivery of an illegal package but turns out to be an attempt to frame him for murder. A tough, street smart cockney, Eddie goes on the lam, then sets out to solve

the mysteries of who has set him up and why. His quest takes him through the extremes of contemporary English society: the black West Indian underworld; the culture of a new breed of hippie (far tougher than the sixties originals), the depressed northern industrial cities of Manchester and Bristol, and the fox hunting life of the still-existent, posh, country house aristocracy.

Pieces of the puzzle are occasionally put in place in the course of the four episodes, but the main intention seems to be a display of the seamy side of things, photographed as often as possible at night, with fog rolling in and previously un-introduced characters speaking in mysterious tones. The camera lingers long over a rat, a fox scavenging at a garbage dump, and Eddie getting falling-down



Denis Lawson as Eddie Cass and Simon Callow as Hugo Silver in *Dead Head*.

drunk and covered with Thames muck or being flung from a train and ending up covered with cow dung. The point, aside from padding out what should have been at most a single fifty-minute program, is that something is rotten in England. "Sounds like something right in the body politic," observes one of the characters when he learns that important people have set Eddie up. And Eddie himself wonders, "What's get-

tin' at people; what's the matter wi' 'em?"

Playwright Howard Brenton, who wrote *Dead Head*, thinks he understands exactly what's the matter. He is the co-author of *Pravda*, the frankly propagandistic London play of two seasons back in which a Rupert Murdoch-like newspaper mogul is heavy-handedly caricatured. In *Dead Head*, Brenton attacks a wide assortment of higher ups, including the Se-

cret Service, decadent aristocrats, and an unnamed member of the Royal Family whose secret vices lie behind the mystery of Eddie's victimization.

This is the sort of revelation one finds either in pornographic comic books or the crude political propaganda coming from places like the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran. And as a matter of fact, *Dead Head* amounts to a combination of propaganda and soft core pornography. In each episode we get to see at least one act of violence or torture and at least one bare-breasted starlet make love to Eddie; all the while we are being told, in heavy cockney, that the system is rotten.

Cockney Eddie, a loser who is also a survivor, is actually a promising character. While pretending his name is Burt,

for example, he is asked by one of the lubricious starlets: "Burt? What's that short for?" And he nonchalantly replies: "Nebuchadnezzar." Eddie gets drunk when he should be alert, doesn't take subtle hints, and is a poor judge of character. All of these traits are unusual in a character investigating a mystery (except for a spoof type like Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau). But playwright Brenton, by having Eddie sell out at the end in an unconvincing way, shows himself as willing to traduce his character as are the evil aristocrats who toy with him during his quest.

We learned two lessons from this production: we can't really follow an authentic cockney accent, and British TV series not done in period settings are likely to be failures.

Cathleen Jordan, Editor; **Lois Adams**, Managing Editor; **Brian Cox**, Associate Editor; **Ralph Rubino**, Art Director; **Terri Czezko**, Associate Art Director; **Ron Kuliner**, Art Editor; **Dennis Doyle**, Associate Designer; **Nancy Siwinski**, Art Assistant; **Carole Dixon**, Production Manager; **Robert J. Allen**, Production Assistant; **Cynthia Manson**, Director, Subsidiary Rights; **Florence Eichin**, Manager, Contracts & Permissions; **Sonya Castellucci**, Circulation Director, Retail Marketing; **Paul Christian**, Circulation Planning Director; **Laura Guth**, Circulation Director, Subscriptions; **Veena Raghavan**, Public Relations Promotions Manager; **Irene Bozoki**, Classified Advertising Director; **Risa Lund**, Advertising Services Manager; **William F. Battista**, Publisher

(New York: 212-557-9100; Chicago: 312-346-0712; Los Angeles: 213-795-3114).

Joel Davis, President; **Fred Edinger**, Senior Vice President, Finance; **Paula Collins**, Senior Vice President, Circulation; **Carl Bartee**, Vice President, Manufacturing; **Stephen Policoff**, Assistant Vice President, Controller.

THE STORY THAT WON

The December Mysterious photo) was won by Tim Marlin, Pennsylvania; H. G. Gan; Lesa Neace of Whites-Pierro of Spring Hill, limity Creek, Oregon; Julia Norma J. Joyner of Medford, Oregon; J. F. Peirce of Bryan, Texas; Margaret Griffin of Fort Worth, Texas; Mildred K. Steller of Walnut Creek, California; Dolly Kravagna of Seattle, Washington; and Sandra A. Russo of Lonerock, Wisconsin.



Photograph contest (see lowe of Arcadia, California. Peter M. Winkler of Frank-Morris of Brighton, Michi-burg, Kentucky; Phyllis De-Florida; B. I. Chance of Sub-Happe of Tampa, Florida;

A CASE OF PODIATRY by Tim Marlowe

The Great Detective pulled tobacco from the toe of the Persian slipper as he sized up our young guest.

"It is but a small feet to deduce your identity. You are Miss Amelia Proudfoot, daughter of the widowed Lady Hammertoe. And, to answer your next question, it is known throughout the weejun that I am the sole of discretion in such delicate matters."

"Very well," she said, with a Scottish burr. "It's a-boot my mother. Over some rubbers of bridge, she met a dashing young man, Thom by name. Tanned and leathery, a man with polish and a witty tongue, it was not long before he horned into our lives and married her."

"And he is not what he claims?" I asked, lacing my fingers together.

"Indeed not, doctor. He purports to market small pigs, but I know that he is a heel and a sneaker. And he has the most odd fetish. On a line between our house and the old pump, he has suspended a number of women's shoes."

The Detective leaned forward. "What kind of shoes?"

"All rather large, I fancy, and quite expensive."

The Detective leaped from his chair. "Souvenirs, from those whom he has wed and murdered before! Miss Proudfoot, your new stepfather is not a plain brown loafer of the lower classes, but a notorious murderer of the uppers! Come, doctor! The game is abreast! We may already be too late to save Lady Hammertoe from . . . Shoebeard!"

CLASSIFIED MARKET

AH-APRIL/88

ALFRED HITCHCOCK—published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is \$2.60 per word—payable in advance—(\$39.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

FANTASTIC 200% Mark-up anti-fog, anti-static lens cleaner. 45 second demo sells. Write: CLEAR DAY, Department H, 609 Hamilton, Arcadia, Indiana 46030.

AGENTS WANTED

WANTED: Managers For Party Plan Business. Profitable. Easy. Free Details. RMB, Box 883, Stevens Point, WI 54481.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet, and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SM, 11 West 32 Street, New York 10001.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

IS it true . . . Jeeps For \$44 Through The Government? Call For Facts! 1-312-742-1142 Ext. 4674.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE LIST! Used Hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, Box 2544, Meriden, CT 06450.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

FREE CATALOG. Used hardback mystery, crime and detective books. Steve Powell, Dept. DP, The Hideaway, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609.

SUPERLEARNING! Triple learning speed through music! Develop Supermemory; Control stress; tap potentials. Free book excerpt & catalog (Distributors Wanted). Superlearning, 450-Z4 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY. 10123.

FREE CATALOG: used hardback mysteries, crime, detective and spy fiction, list A: rare and first editions, list B: reading copies want lists accepted. MITCHELL BOOKS, 1395 E. WASHINGTON BL., PASADENA, CA 91104 (818) 798-4438.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

FREE CATALOG! Used hardback mystery, detective and true crime. Wallace Pratt, 1801 Gough St., San Francisco, CA 94109.

VINTAGE Mysteries - Free Catalogue! Good, Inexpensive, Recycled Detective Fiction! Grave Matters, Box 32192-G, Cincinnati, Ohio 45232.

PRIVATE EYE FAN? New magazine includes fact, fiction, reviews, more. Send \$3.75 postpaid, to: P.I. Magazine, 755 Bronx, Toledo, Ohio 43609.

"GREAT" MONEY MAKING opportunity. AMAZING NEW book shows HOW to start your PROFITABLE business at home. WRITE TODAY for FREE details. George Vakis, 15105 Sherman Way, Apt. 209-A, Van Nuys, CA 91405.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pays." Includes certificate worth \$2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send \$2.25 (includes postage) to I.M. Bozoki, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

MAKE MONEY WITH MICROCOMPUTERS. SUBSCRIBE TO COMPU-VENTURE. SEND \$1.25 for sample or \$12.00/12 Issues. MSC. Box 1039-INM. Mt Vernon, New York 10551-0309.

"GREAT" MONEY MAKING opportunity. AMAZING NEW book shows HOW to start your PROFITABLE business at home. WRITE TODAY for FREE details. George Vakis, 15105 Sherman Way, Apt. 209-A, Van Nuys, CA 91405.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

SELL Books! High Profits! No Minimum Orders! Free Catalog: Duke's Publishing, Box 183, Candler, Florida 32624.

PLACE

CLASSIFIED

AH-APRIL/88

To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL REAL ESTATE APPRAISER OR PROPERTY MANAGER. Home Study or classes Atlanta, Los Angeles. Free information. National College of Appraisal. 800-223-4542.

TAKE PICTURES for profit. Try our unique methods. Write: Camera Ventures, Box 771, Lamar, CO 81052.

HOMEWORKERS! Earn 60¢ each envelope addressed, our instructions. Details: Distributors, Box 431-DG, Lynbrook, New York 11563.

LEARN HOW to start your own business at home! Details FREE. The Innovative Company, P.O. Box 1122, Fayetteville, NC 28302-1122.

SMALL Business Loans available now! Money for business start or expansion. For Immediate Information: 1-800-824-6461.

BUILD FORTUNE IN SILVER BULLION PROVEN, DETAILED PLAN. CONTACT: SILVER, 3306 W. CAPITAL AVE., GRAND ISLAND, NE 68803

GET PAID for reading books! Write Ace-WW, 161 Lincolnway, North Aurora, IL 60542

MAKE MONEY Talking! Takes one week. Act Now! send \$5.95 To: Money Talks, Box 3522A, Davenport, Iowa 52808

FREE!!! Money Maker's Monthly Wealth Building Kit. Write: Opportunity Publications, Box 20235-DP-03, Salt Lake City, UT 84120.

GET RICH with your own mail order business. Free Details. Jeff Stork, Dept. AH, P.O. Box 951, Batavia, NY 14020.

\$1000 WEEKLY POSSIBLE! Mailing Envelopes! Easy Guaranteed Income! Free Details: Sevenstar, Box 187-DP, Niagara Falls, NY 14305.

SELL Mailorder/Multi-level offers on leading Radio Station—WJFF-CANY. RR #1. Hope Valley, RI 02832. (401) 539-8502.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations... Closeouts... Job Lots... Single Samples. Free Details. Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 1409-IO, Holland MI 49424.

BEAUTIFUL 14-K gold jewelry, just \$12.00 "refundable" brings Two Giant full color catalogs—featuring over 14,000 items including gifts. Wright-Way Wholesale, 4242 Harrison Ave., Rockford, IL 61108.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, Newbern, NC 28560.

HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME, no classes. Diploma awarded, low cost. Information free, call toll free anytime. 1-800-228-5600 or write: American School, Dept. 388, 850 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

SELF EDUCATE for lucrative career \$1 information SASE: MHaigood Consultants, P.O. Box 114, Valley View, TX 76722.

FINANCIAL

SMALL Business Loans available now! Money for business start or expansion. For Immediate Information: 1-800-824-6461.

FOR INVENTORS

INVENTORS! Can you patent and profit from your idea? Call AMERICAN INVENTORS CORPORATION for free information. Over a decade of service. 1-800-228-5656. In Massachusetts or Canada call (413) 568-3753.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

A gift sure to please—ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send \$19.50 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1933, Marion, OH 43305.

AH-APRIL / 88

Classified Continued

HYPNOTISM

OBTAIN SUCCESS! Unlock amazing, subconscious abilities through hypnosis tapes. Certified Hypnotherapist. Free information. CHB Enterprises, Dept. A01, P.O. Box 12048, Baltimore, Maryland 21281.

INVENTIONS WANTED

PROTECT, PATENT AND DEVELOP. Your Invention rights before sale. Registered Patent Agent and Licensed Professional Engineer. Send for FREE PATENT INFORMATION Every Inventor Should Have. Ricard L. Miller, 12 Parkside Drive, Suite-1, Dix Hills, NY 11746. (516) 499-4343.

JEWELRY

SOLID, GOLD JEWELRY. MANUFACTURER DISTRIBUTORSHIP AVAILABLE. INFORMATION CASSETTE SEND \$1. GF, BOX 1016 HIGH RIDGE, MO 63049.

CLOSEOUT JEWELRY. 55¢ Dozen. 25¢ gets catalog. ROUSSELS, 107-910 Dow, Arlington, MA 02174-7199.

LOANS BY MAIL

BORROW \$25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report! Success Research, Box 19739-SP, Indianapolis, IN 46219.

BORROW \$100-\$100,000! FAST, CONFIDENTIAL! MARIGOLD, BOX 2030-AA, RICHARDSON, TX 75080.

THE ARABS HAVE MILLIONS to Loan, Invest, Purchase! Free Details! PRS-DC, Box 417, Vidor, TX 77662.

MAILING LISTS

FRESH HOT NAMES!! OPPORTUNITY SEEKERS. Peel/Stick Labels. Zip Coded. GUARANTEED DELIVERABLE! 500/\$20; 1000/\$35; 2000/\$60. JR Enterprises, 809 Briarwood-102, Victoria, Texas 77904.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

CAN YOU STUFF 1000 envelopes for \$500.00 weekly? Send six 22¢ stamps. Blume, Box 866714, Plano, TX 75086.

\$60.00 per Hundred securing-stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing mail! Free Supplies, Postage! No Selling! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCM, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

EASY Business, earn \$1,000's Weekly! Free details! Send Stamped Addressed Envelope: Todco, Dept. 3, 4219 W. Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91505.

WOULD you stuff 1000 envelopes for \$1000.00? Find out how. Send stamped envelope to Clemens Enterprises, D3528 Esplendor, Irving, TX 75062.

SAVE HUNDREDS!!! 40 sensational, revolutionary "Get Rich Quick" offers evaluated by professionals. Details \$2.00: "Lowdown," 1205 Guerneville, Santa Rosa, California 95403.

OF INTEREST TO ALL

PROTECT Your home and loved ones from crime. Free FBI crime report. Write to: Security and Protection, Box 418207, Ctn. O. 45241.

COMPETE in games of strategy with Players across America! FREE info: ALLIANCE, Box 1169, Oregon City, OR 97045.

DO YOU KNOW "How to Write a Classified Ad that Pulls?" Instructive booklet tells how. Also includes a certificate worth \$2.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications: For your copy send \$2.25 (includes postage) to I.M. Bozoki, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

**YOU'LL MAKE
MONEY**

**SAVE MONEY TOO—
BY READING and ANSWERING
THESE CLASSIFIED ADS**

Classified Continued

AH-APRIL/88

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Refined, sincere people. 18-80. Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American — Mexican — Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

ORIENTAL ladies seeking correspondence, marriage. Presentations by American husband, Filipina wife. Asian Experience, Box 1214T, Novato, CA 94948.

INTERNATIONAL PEN FRIENDS—Exchange letters. USA and foreign, your choice. Patricia Smith, 2061 Perry Terrace, Stuart, Florida 34997.

PEN Pals! \$2.00 Two pals. Include age and photo. Steven—Marianne Kullmer, POB 418, Dysart, Iowa 52224.

BLANK CERTIFICATES. Birth. Baptismal. Marriage. Divorce. Award. Wills. High school. College diplomas. University Degrees. Parchment w/gold seals. 2 for \$4.00. Guaranteed. Cardinal Publishing, 2071-P5 Emerson, Jacksonville, FL 32207. Rush C.O.D. Call (24 Hrs) 1-904-396-1744—Minimum 5 certificates.

NICE SINGLES, ladies and men, with Christian values. Free details. Send age, interests. Dept. 10, Box 454, Crossville, TN 38557.

PERSONAL—Cont'd.

NATIONWIDE Singles Magazine. Send Name, Address, Age. Send No Money. Exchange, 1817 Welton, #1580, Denver, Colo. 80202.

ATTRACTIVE, Faithful Oriental wives. All ages. FREE details, photos. Anticipations, Box 2307K, MACPO, Makati, 3117 Philippines.

JAPANESE. Asian. European beauties seek friendship! Hundreds all ages! Information: Inter-Pacific, Box 304-T, Birmingham, Michigan 48012.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

TAPES & CASSETTES

OLDTIME radio programs. Mysteries, adventure, suspense, science fiction, comedies. Classic tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

UNUSUAL BOOKS

THE INTELLIGENCE LIBRARY: Many unique books & official manuals on RESTRICTED subjects—Bugging, Wiretapping, Locksmithing, Covert Investigation, & MUCH MORE. Free brochures. MENTOR, DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354.

For Greater Savings...Results...and Profits...

PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:

Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.

For further information write to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager,
Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

12 BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES JUST \$1

**A \$190.40 VALUE IN ORIGINAL
PUBLISHERS' EDITIONS**

That's right! We'd like you to enjoy \$190.40 worth of great new mystery and suspense stories, as your introduction to The Detective Book Club ... *for over 45 years, the unsurpassed value leader in mystery fiction.*

All 12 intriguing novels will be delivered to you in 4 specially designed, easy-to-read triple-volumes, available exclusively from The Detective Book Club for *only \$1 plus shipping.*



Top Quality Selections at Unbeatable Prices

As a member you'll forget daily cares as you solve baffling murder cases, suspenseful whodunits, tense courtroom conflicts and more, all featuring the challenging plots and gripping action that are the hallmarks of today's most-read mystery masters like Dick Francis, Elizabeth Peters, Tony Hillerman plus many others ... chosen for Club members by our expert editors from among the more-than-400 mysteries published each year.

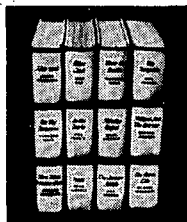
Best of all, each monthly Club selection (described in advance) is offered to you at *unequalled savings*. As a member, you're guaranteed 60% ... and often 70%, 80% or more ... off the original publishers' prices. Each selection includes three newly-published novels in one handsome hardbound triple-volume edition for *only \$11.95. That's just \$3.99 per full-length mystery!*

No Risk, No Obligation

When you become a member of The Detective Book Club, there is *no minimum* number of books you must buy. You may reject any book *before or after* you receive it. You may cancel your membership at any time, with no obligation. It's that simple.

Send No Money Now

Simply fill out the coupon on this page and return it to The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576. You'll enjoy a *10 day free trial* to examine the evidence and judge for yourself. *But act now!* If you love great mysteries, it would be a crime not to accept this offer.



Yes, please enroll me as a member and send me my 4 triple-volumes shown here, containing 12 mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for 10 days, then will either accept all 4 volumes for only \$1 plus shipping, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the Club's Preview describing my next selections. I will always have at least 30 days to reject any selection by returning the form provided. I may return any book within 30 days and owe nothing. For each triple-volume I keep, I will send you just \$11.95 plus shipping. I understand there are no minimum number of books I must buy and I may cancel my membership at any time.

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

88-CY
D26M1Z

WALTER J. BLACK, INC.



THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576

Since 1942, the best way to get more mystery for your money.

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

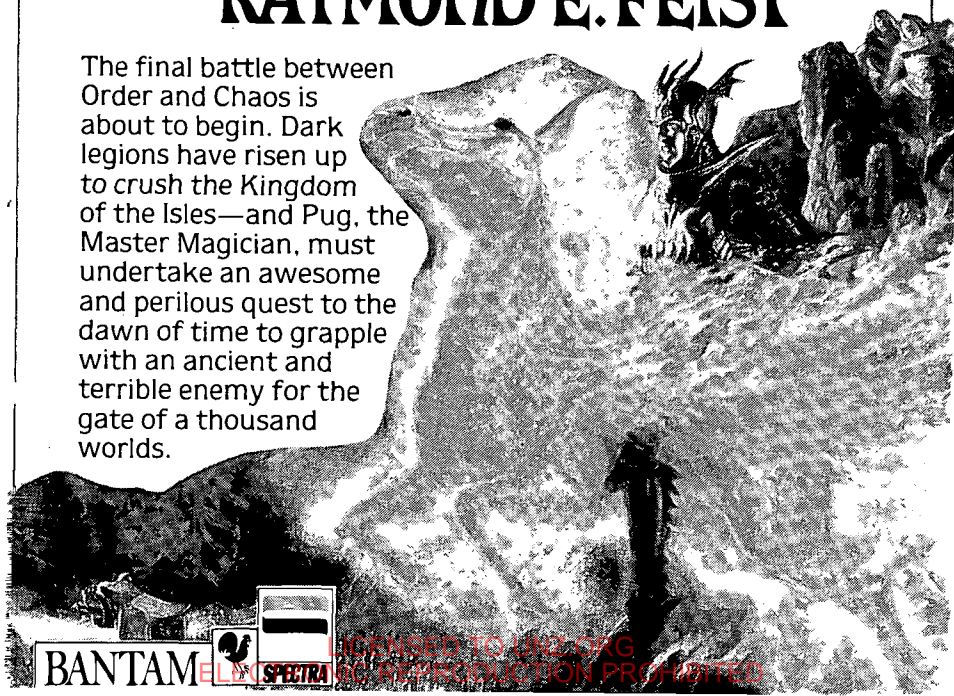
The new masterpiece
of heroic fantasy reaches its
heartstopping conclusion

A DARKNESS AT SETHANON

VOLUME IV IN THE RIFTWAR SAGA
BY

RAYMOND E. FEIST

The final battle between Order and Chaos is about to begin. Dark legions have risen up to crush the Kingdom of the Isles—and Pug, the Master Magician, must undertake an awesome and perilous quest to the dawn of time to grapple with an ancient and terrible enemy for the gate of a thousand worlds.



BANTAM



licensed to UNZ.ORG

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES JUST \$1

QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE

by Ashford

HERNAUT BAGLEY

WIND OF MR. MOSLEY Greenwood

THE CAPE MURDERS

TONY MILLERMAN

SKINWALKERS

St. Peter's
Finger

GLADYS MITCHELL

BOLT

TROJAN GOLD

ELIZABETH PETERS

MURDER ON A MYSTERY TOUR

Patrick Robinson

THE DEAD ROOM

HERBERT REYNOLD

THE BEST CELLAR

RAFAEL

William I. McAndrew

A \$190.40 Value in Original Publishers' Edition

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
For details see last page
ELECTRONIC RIGHTS ONLY NOT PERMITTED